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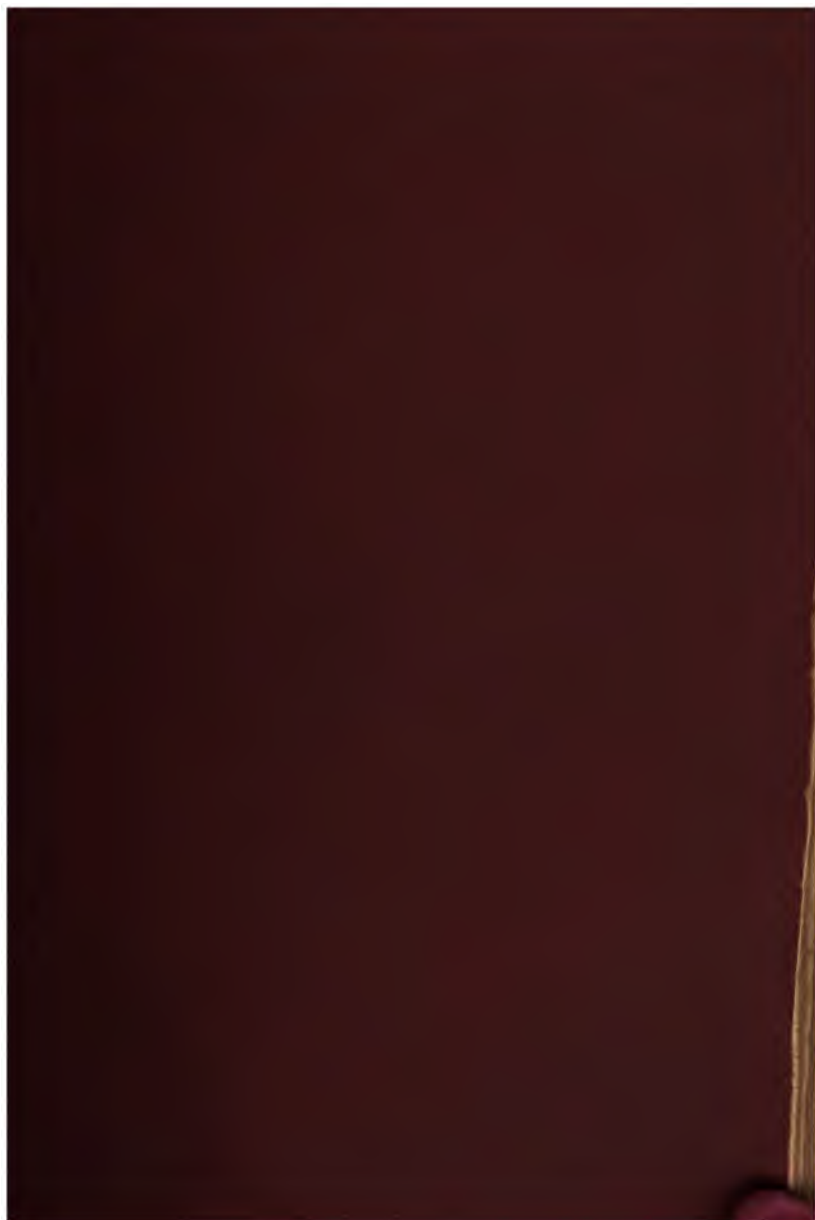
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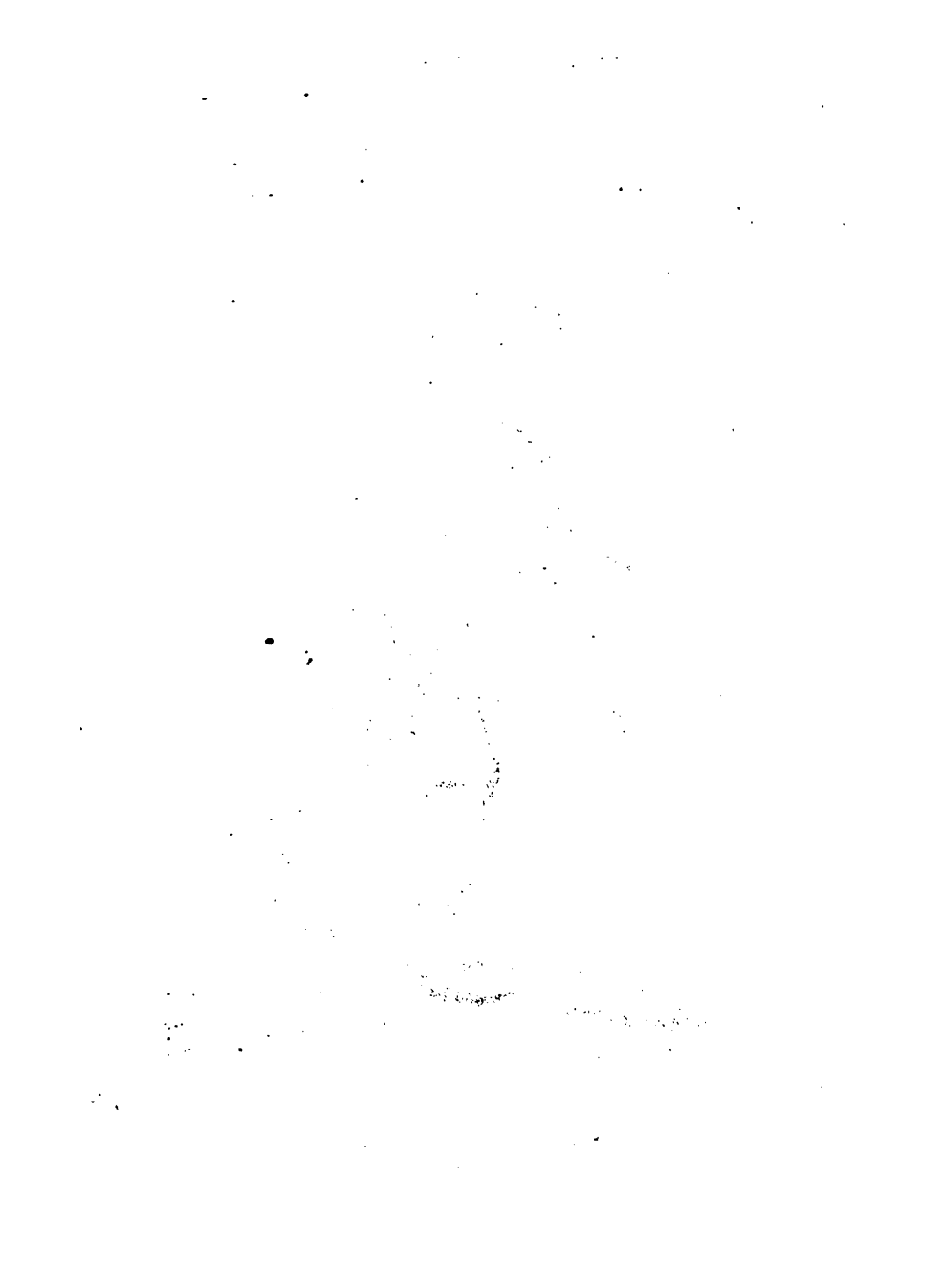














"Penny, please, penny. 'Tis so cold de day. Please penny. Son  
How cold poor Gains ppe." *Lucy* 40

U. S. G. S.

W. H. N. CO. & CO.

1874.



# DARE TO DO RIGHT.

*THREE TALES.*

BY

JULIA A. MATHEWS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE GOLDEN LADDER SERIES,' 'DRAYTON HALL STORIES,'  
ETC. ETC.

LONDON:

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# GRANDFATHER'S FAITH.

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## I.

CHARLIE STOCKTON.

'FATHER, what is to be done with that boy? I am in perfect despair.'

If Miss Harriet Mason had known that 'that boy' lay on the grass beneath the shade of the old willow whose graceful branches floated lazily in at the open window of the sitting-room, she might have been more guarded in her speech; but, disparaging as her opinion of him evidently was, the boy did not seem to be much chagrined by it; and even if he had seen the expression of her tired, troubled face as she seated herself in an arm-chair beside her father, it probably would have affected him as little as her words, for Charlie Stockton did not love his Aunt Harriet over much.

'Poor old Auntie! you and I are two too many for her, Caspar,' he said, with a laugh, pulling the long hair of a great Newfoundland dog upon whose shaggy head his own brown curls were resting. 'I wouldn't wonder if she ousted you yet, old boy; but if you go, I go too, that's sure, the old Tartar!'

Certainly, if Miss Harriet had seen the darkening of those clear handsome eyes, and the defiant toss of the curly head, as the speaker raised himself from his re-



cumbent position, she would not have felt a whit less despairing of her unruly charge.

The old gentleman sitting beside her had not answered her somewhat impatient query and exclamation. He sat with one knee crossed over its fellow, the foot which rested on the floor tapping the carpet with a slow regular movement, which was as expressive of the deep thought in which he was lost as was the absorbed quiet face which seemed to be watching the pendulum-like motions of his foot. The long fingers of the wrinkled but still sinewy hand were thrust up into the soft white hair which covered his head, and the high broad forehead was drawn and furrowed in anxiety. It was a fine old face, handsome, intellectual, and, although very determined, very gentle and lovable in its expression.

Miss Harriet sat watching it for a while, her own impatient, nervous face gathering meanwhile into a dark frown, and at length said sharply,—

‘Well, father?’

He lifted up his white head, and turned his quiet grey eyes towards her.

‘You said that you were in despair, Harriet? I am not. I have hope still for our boy.’

‘Oh yes! I suppose so,’ she said, in a tone of strong irritation. ‘You always do see hope, father, where no one else can see it. But what you can find in Charlie to build on, I cannot imagine.’

‘There is very much in him that is good,’ said Dr. Mason mildly; ‘but if there were not, I should still believe that God yet means to use him for some noble end. For did I not hear his dying mother give him to God? and would He refuse the gift? Did I not hear her plead that the sin of his father might not be visited

upon her innocent baby ? Did I not hear her say, " I give Thee back Thy precious gift, dear Lord. Take in Thine own strong hands this child whom my dying hands are too weak to hold, and keep him safely. I give him wholly to Thee ; make him wholly Thine " ? ' And what a peaceful light was on her face when she went home ! No, Harriet, I can never despair of the boy.'

His voice, which had risen to great earnestness and feeling as he repeated the prayer of his dead child, sank very low again ; but his last words, though softly spoken, were firm as unshaken faith could make them. Harriet Mason was not cheered by them, but they at least stilled her fretful impatience ; and she sat quietly thinking her own troubled thoughts, leaving her father to his reflections.

Fifteen years before, Mary Mason, the Doctor's youngest daughter, had married, in direct opposition to her father's will and command, a young man whom she had known but a few months. From the first the Doctor had disliked the stranger. His clear, honest eyes had pierced the thin disguise of respectability and morality under which the man had sought his daughter's acquaintance ; and on making immediate inquiries with regard to him, he had found his suspicions were quite correct, and that Henry Stockton was by no means a person whom he would choose to welcome to his house. But no persuasions or entreaties could induce Mary to believe the aspersions cast upon the man whom her father now found, to his amazement and dismay, to be her declared lover. And when, finding arguments and commands alike useless, Dr. Mason had forbidden Henry Stockton to see his daughter, she had married him at once, leaving her home without a word of farewell to her father.

Nearly two years after the day on which this shadow fell upon his home, Dr. Mason heard through a friend that Mary had been seen in New York; and hastening to the city, he sought for her until he found her. Those two years had shown Mary Mason that her father had not even suspected the abyss of wickedness into which her husband had sunk. She had been dragged down into depths of misery and wretchedness such as she had never imagined, and now lay dying, with her baby boy beside her, in loneliness and poverty. But in her misery, far away from all earthly friends, she had found the 'Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' The 'Brother born for adversity' had won the wandering but now penitent heart, and was leading it Home—Home to rest, and peace, and joy.

Dr. Mason had not for a moment doubted but that the child whom Mary left behind her, and who had been called by his name, would be given to his care. She had besought him most earnestly to take the little one home, and bring him up as his own son; and he had promised her that he should fill her vacant place in the household. But Henry Stockton utterly refused to part with the child. Whether he really loved him with such love as he had to give, or whether he simply chose to retain him to annoy and distress Mary's family, the Doctor could not tell; but he refused harshly and violently all his persuasions, and even the pecuniary inducements which the grandfather hoped would be irresistible to him.

On the day of Mary's death, Dr. Mason left the house for a few hours to make arrangements to have her removed to her old home, and laid beside her dead mother. When he returned, only his daughter's still, quiet face

was there to welcome him. Her husband and her little child were gone. The people in the house either could not or would not give him any information of Stockton's whereabouts ; and after searching in vain for him for many long hours, he returned home with his sad burden, hopeless of finding him.

Month after month, and year after year, there was to be seen in the daily papers of New York an advertisement stating, that if 'H. S.' desired to relinquish the child now in his care, he had but to state where the boy could be found, and his friends would send for him. But no answering paragraph greeted the eyes which sought it eagerly, but wearily, every morning of every passing month.

Eight years had rolled away—years which had whitened the hair on the broad temples, and furrowed the brow of the old man ; but they had neither dimmed the light of the soft grey eyes, nor wasted the strength of the tall, erect figure. Eight years, and still that paragraph addressed to 'H. S.' appeared in the daily papers, and still the bright eyes watched for the answer that had not yet come.

But one morning, as Dr. Mason sat in his office, a telegram was placed in his hand. Opening it, he saw that it was signed by a Philadelphia Express Company with whom he had had some business dealings.

'A ragged boy, eight years old,—name, Charles Mason Stockton,—has been forwarded to us from St. Augustine, consigned to you, expenses paid. Shall we ship him to London ?'

'Granted at last, to my prayers and hers ! My God, I thank Thee !'

The Doctor sat for a moment, folding the paper, and

father, with the message that, bad as he was, he did not want his son to grow up in the life which he had led ; a story which was confirmed a few days later by the arrival by post of a paper sent to the child by one of his father's former comrades, containing an account of the *fracas*, and Stockton's subsequent death.

A visit to a barber, a furnishing store, and a tailor, transformed the little street-loafer into as gentlemanly-looking a boy as Dr. Mason needed to have wished to see sitting at his side in the cars as they were whirled rapidly towards Lindon. But alas ! it was not only in appearance that the boy had sunk beneath the level of a gentleman. His very language breathed the spirit of the class in the midst of which he had been reared ; and as day after day passed on, and the first shyness consequent on his new position wore off, faults of the most glaring kind began to make themselves manifest.

Aunt Harriet was in despair, most truly. Having proved that her father was absolutely immovable in his determination to bring the child to their own home, she had accepted her cross with such patience as she might, honestly resolving, and striving too, to do what she could to make the boy a blessing, instead of the curse which she feared he might prove, to the home which had so kindly received him ; but her task was a very difficult and, to a woman of her impatient temperament, almost a hopeless one.

For it was not only that Charles was entirely untaught and ungoverned : if his ignorance, his violent temper, and his self-will had been his only faults, there might have yet remained a good foundation on which to build up a noble structure ; but the worst point in his character was that he was utterly unreliable : his word could never

be depended upon, if by dishonouring it he could gain an advantage or escape punishment. And the most disheartening aspect of the case was, that he could not be made ashamed of a falsehood ; in fact, he rather gloried in it, if it had been a successful one, and seemed to think that to be so deficient in smartness as to be found out in a misdemeanour was far more disgraceful than to hide it with a lie.

So far did he carry this perverted idea, that he had once gone to his grandfather in great anger with a friend in whose behalf he had exercised his powers of deceit, but who had been too honourable to avail himself of them. Dr. Mason received his story in a way which for ever silenced his boasting of a successful falsehood in his presence.

‘And he was punished, after all,’ Charlie said indignantly, having recounted the occurrence with a great deal of excitement and earnestness, ‘when I’d put myself to such trouble about it. The great spooney confessed it all, after I’d lied him out of it so beautifully.’

He was perhaps too much engrossed in his recital to notice the flashing of the eyes which were bent upon him, and the gradual straightening of the tall figure, or he may have attributed it to a sympathetic indignation on his account ; be that as it may, the answer he received startled him.

‘Lied him out of it, sir ! Lied him out of it !’ exclaimed the Doctor, drawing himself up until it seemed to the frightened boy that he was at least two inches taller than his ordinary height. ‘Have you the audacity to stand before me, and brag of having lied a friend out of a dilemma ? Do you know that you bear my name,

sir? and yet do you dare to boast to me that you have disgraced it by telling a lie?'

Charlie stood staring at him with parted lips and wide-open eyes, too much stunned even to attempt a reply. He had been used to be laughed at, and to be called smart and quick-witted, when he had, through a dexterous falsehood, escaped merited punishment; and here was his gentle, tender-hearted grandfather, who had so often excused him to Aunt Harriet when seriously in fault, breaking out into such anger and severity simply because he had done what he had often been praised for in time past.

But as he sat there in silent bewilderment and dismay, his grandfather's face softened somewhat, and, laying his hand upon his head, he said very gravely, but more quietly,—

'Charles Mason Stockton, I had it in my heart just now to take from you the name which has never needed to own to a lie until now; but I will not, for it may one day lead you to a nobler ambition. Go now, my boy; but remember that a liar is the meanest thing on God's earth; nothing is so low, so vile and worthless, as the man who will save himself loss or pain by selling his honour.'

The boy went out awed and subdued. His habit of untruthfulness was too deeply seated to be rooted out at once, even by this; but henceforth he hid it most carefully from his grandfather's eyes.

But with all this, 'Charlie Mason,' as he was universally called in the little village of Lindon where his grandfather had for fifty years and more practised his profession, was by no means wholly bad. There was much in him on which to rest a hope that the care and

love which bore with him and shielded him might in time be repaid. More than ordinarily quick and intelligent, with a joyous, sunny disposition, and an affectionate heart, full of large and generous impulses, his was certainly not a perfectly hopeless case, although he often tried most sorely not only the temper and patience, but the very faith and love, of those who had given him both home and heart-room in his time of need.



## II.

### HARLAND'S FARM.

It was not very surprising that Miss Harriet should have felt herself almost at her wits' end that morning, as she sat in the sitting-room beside her father, thinking so seriously of Charlie's misdoings. There had been for the past few weeks a series of petty robberies perpetrated in the neighbourhood. Fruit and vegetables had been stolen from the gardens, hens' nests had been robbed both of fresh laid eggs and of young chickens, simply in the latter case, as it seemed, for the pleasure of stealing ; for in many instances the poor little fledglings had been dropped in the public road near the gates of the yards from which they had been taken, and left there to perish.

After these operations had been going on for some time, two young farmers, who had been somewhat heavy losers by the depredations, determined to sit up all night and watch their premises ; for they had noticed during the day that some of the schoolboys, who passed their farm on their way to school and back, had looked with covetous eyes on an overburdened plum-tree whose heavy branches were weighed to the ground with their rich purple fruit ; and had then drawn together to whisper and consult, quite ignorant of the fact that the owners of the longed-for fruit were close at hand, and watching them with very unfriendly eyes.

It was a bright, clear night ; and the two farmers had not lain hidden behind the thick copse very long, when

the sound of stealthy footsteps came creeping up the road, and four young fellows, about twelve years old or more, leaped the low wall, and made directly for the plum-tree. The farmers had decided that, if the tree were first attacked by the expected raiders, they would remain in concealment until they could determine whether the boys were simply fruit-thieves, or whether they belonged to the band of marauders who had been making such havoc among the fowls. So they lay very still while the young burglars shook down the beautiful fruit, and filled four large bags which they had brought with them.

‘Do you see that they don’t put any in their pockets?’ asked the younger of the two brothers.

‘Yes. That says—eggs,’ said the elder. ‘Keep quiet now. They’ve got through.’

The bags were all full ; but instead of scaling the wall again, the boys lifted their burdens upon their backs, and stole softly away in the direction of the barn, accompanied by a huge black Newfoundland dog which had been silently stalking to and fro, as if on the look-out for worthier spoil, all the while that the boys had been busily gathering the plums. As they turned toward the barn, the great creature had bounded forward with a low bark of delight, which one of the lads had instantly hushed with a muttered—

‘Shut up, Caspar.’

The dog had become quiet on the instant ; but one of the men nudged the other, and whispered,—

‘I thought as much.’

Rising from their hiding-place, they followed the boys, who went directly to the hen-house. Their intention had been to allow the whole party to enter, and to

capture them there ; but the dog defeated their plan of operations.

As the boys entered the enclosure, a venerable old chanticleer, intent on protecting his domestic roost, dashed down from his perch upon a rafter, with a fierce outcry. Caspar rushed upon him instantly. It was by no means the first time that he had aided his comrades in their work by quickly strangling any contumacious father of a feathered family that might oppose such a forcible entry of his premises ; but the present patriarch was not to be so easily vanquished. With swollen crest and outspread wings, he flew upon his assailant, screaming with rage, and beating Caspar's devoted head and face with his heavy pinions ; while the dog bounded into the air again and again, vainly trying to unseat his antagonist from his perch upon his head, barking furiously with mingled pain and rage.

Just at this point in the proceedings, as the four boys rushed to the aid of their champion, the door was thrown open, and two young men sprang in upon the freebooters. There was a quick stampede for the door, and a short sharp scuffle ; but the farmers would have come off victorious in their attempt to seize the whole party if it had not been that Caspar, seeing his master in jeopardy, dashed his head madly against the door of the hen-house, dislodging his painful encumbrance, and, with a fierce growl, sprang upon the young man who had laid his hand upon his friend. The shock, perfectly unexpected, staggered the man for the instant ; and in that instant the boy whom he had caught with his right hand (holding another meanwhile with his left), but whose face he had not yet seen, broke from him, and with a bound cleared the distance between himself and the open door,

and in another minute was almost out of sight, flying down the road with the dog in hot pursuit.

But the farmer was not much less swift of foot, and, leaving his other victim to his brother, he gave chase with such goodwill, that when he reached the house of Dr. Mason, a full half-mile from his own home, he was quite sure that he had seen his prisoner vault in at one of the lower windows as he entered the gate.

There was a light shining softly through the library blinds, and the young man rang the door-bell with a peal which startled the Doctor and his daughter as they sat together, he reading aloud to her as she bent over her embroidery.

'Some one for me, I suppose,' said the Doctor, rising. 'Twelve o'clock!' with a glance at the timepiece on the mantel. 'I did not know it was so late.'

'Why, Harland, is this you?' he asked, as he opened the door. 'No one ill at home, I hope.'

'No, sir; no, sir,' stammered the man, very unwilling, now that the Doctor's kind, sympathetic face confronted him, to tell his errand. 'But—but—is your grandson at home, sir?'

'At home, and in bed these two hours past. You don't want to see him at this time of night, do you?'

'Well, sir, I'm much afraid you're mistaken, sir. Unless I've made the biggest blunder of my life, Dr. Mason, I caught him in my hen-yard just now, and chased him all the way home here. He jumped in at yonder window.'

The Doctor's face had darkened more and more heavily as the man spoke.

'Come with me,' he said gravely, when Harland con-

cluded ; and leading the way, he took him up-stairs to Charlie's room.

The light from the candle in his grandfather's hand fell on the boy's face as it lay on the pillow, flushed and warm, but apparently quiet in sleep. Dr Mason glanced at his companion, then leaned over the bed and spoke—  
'Charlie !'

The name was softly uttered, and only a slow, somewhat heavy breathing answered him.

'You must have been mistaken,' he said, turning to the young farmer.

'I wish I had been, sir,' replied the man sturdily, 'but I don't think it.'

'But he could not have fallen into so sound a sleep so soon after such an exciting race.'

'No, sir,' was the sententious answer.

The Doctor's face flushed. He bent again over the supposed sleeper, and this time the boy's name rang out in a sharp, strong tone—

'Charlie !'

He sprang up at once, and glanced round him with a startled look, his elbow resting on the pillow, his brown eyes lifted to his grandfather's stern face.

'What's the matter ?' he asked quickly.

'This is the matter,' replied Dr. Mason, drawing aside, and pointing to Harland.

'Somebody sick ?' asked Charlie, with a look of vague wonder.

'No, young master, nobody ain't sick,' replied Harland, 'unless you're sick of running. But you needn't try to put me off the scent that way. You *looked* sound asleep, and no mistake ; but I know that curly brown head of yours, if I didn't see your face ; and here's the

very clothes you had on too,' touching Charlie's garments, which lay on a chair near the bed. 'Now I don't want to be hard on anybody belonging to the Doctor, but this thing has gone on long enough, and it's got to be stopped ; we farmers can't afford it, no way.'

Every vestige of colour had faded out of Dr. Mason's face, leaving it almost grey in its pallor ; but Charlie's ruddy cheeks were as bright as ever, and he sat gazing into the man's face with a curious blending of amusement and annoyance in his expression.

'You don't seem to remember that I don't know what you and Grandpa were talking about before you waked me,' said he, with a little laugh. 'And, any-way, Grandpa,' he added, a vexed look crossing his forehead, 'I can't imagine why our friend here should be brought into my room at this time of night. If you had had no objection, sir, I should very much have preferred to have been called down-stairs if he wanted to see me. There is some sort of misunderstanding here, of course ; but if there is anything more to be said about it, I would be glad if you would take our visitor down-stairs, while I get up and dress myself. I will follow you in ten minutes.'

Nothing more perfectly innocent and open than the boy's whole manner could be imagined. Harland himself was almost deceived by it. He stood looking in amazement at the speaker, very much inclined to doubt the evidence of his own senses. But Dr. Mason had been deceived before by that innocent manner, and he was not yet satisfied. Leaning down, until his white head almost touched the brown curls, he said earnestly,

'Charlie, be honest and true with me. Look into my face, my boy, and tell me whether you have been on

Harland's farm to-night. Whatever fault you have been guilty of, be true to yourself and to me, and tell me, on your honour, whether you have been there.'

The handsome eyes looked straight into the bending, entreating face.

'I tell you, Grandpa, solemnly, that I have not been within a mile of Harland's farm since sunset.'

'Thank God for that,' said Dr. Mason, and lifted up his face, and looked at the farmer.

'I think that there has been some error,' said he kindly. 'I am sorry that you have been wronged in this way again; but I cannot believe that my boy has had anything to do with it.'

'I don't know how to believe that I'm mistaken, sir,' replied Harland in a doubtful, uncertain tone. 'I saw the young fellow go into that window down-stairs as plain as I ever saw anything in my life. And as to these pants, I'd swear to them in any court of'—

Harland paused, and the Doctor's heart stood still; for as the man in his earnestness laid his hand upon the article in question, a faint 'Peep, peep, peep,' issued from the garment. In another moment his hand was plunged into the pocket, and drawn out again, holding a small chicken, drenched and half suffocated in the mass of crushed eggs with which the pocket was filled.

A further examination brought forth more eggs, all broken in the boy's flight and hasty disrobing of himself, and a brood of twelve tiny chickens, just hatched, and every one dead.

But not one word of triumph or vengeance did the farmer utter. If he had been alone with the false young marauder, it is more than likely that he would have dealt him summary, and by no means light, punishment; for

his little chickens were his soul's delight ; and he was, besides, enraged at the deceit which had been, with at least some measure of success, practised upon him. But the grey head, bowed wearily upon the wrinkled hand, as the Doctor stood with his elbow leant upon the mantel, his pale face looking stedfastly down upon the now guilty face on the pillow, held him silent.

And when Dr. Mason turned to him at last, saying, 'If you would be kind enough to leave us until to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, I should be glad.' He went from the room with a low-spoken 'Good-night, sir,' as gentle and as sad as if he had been leaving a house where death had cast its shadow.

Some time had passed since Harland had left the room, and still Dr. Mason stood leaning against the mantel, looking down at his grandson without speaking.

'Well, Charlie,' he said at last, as if he had been waiting all this while in the hope that the boy might have something to say which might in some measure palliate his fault.

'Well, sir,' said Charlie, relieved beyond expression by having the long silence broken, and speaking with an embarrassed laugh, 'I'm afraid that small chicken has floored me pretty thoroughly.'

Then he cried out with a great cry, as if the boy had struck him with a knife so sharp as to have cut to his very heart,—

'Don't, don't ! O Charlie, Charlie !' and turned away his face, and covered it with hands which trembled as Charlie had never seen them tremble before.

For a long while there was silence again between them ; until, unable any longer to endure the sight of the bent figure and drooping head, the boy crept out



of his bed, and, touching his grandfather's shoulder, said gently,—

‘I'm sorry, Grandpa ; on my word, I am.’

‘On your word?’ repeated Dr. Mason, without even turning towards him. ‘What is your word? Five years! Five long years of the deepest, strongest love of my old heart,—five long years of the most watchful care and training that I know how to give ; and this is all that I have done! He can look me firmly in the face, and tell me an unblushing lie, and then laugh at its exposure!’

He seemed to be speaking to himself, in intense self-pity, rather than to his grandson ; and after a little he turned and walked slowly from the room, as if he had forgotten his presence.

Perhaps it was as well so. Perhaps no words of stern displeasure, no reproach or threat of punishment, could have so humbled the boy, or have made his sin so hateful in his own eyes, as the sight of that usually erect, commanding figure, now crushed by shame and pain, and the broken tones of the deep rich voice. When the door had closed upon his grandfather, he flung himself face downward on the bed, weeping and sobbing like a little child.

But Charlie Stockton had wept and sobbed before. More than once, in the five years since he had come to live in the shelter and comfort of his grandfather's home, his affectionate heart had been touched by the grief with which his wrong-doing had darkened its brightness ; but his sorrow had been only a wave which had broken in tears, and then rolled back : it had never reached the depths of his soul, and stirred into tumult the nobler impulses and powers which lay dormant there. Even

now his paroxysm of repentance was not violent enough to last beyond a few moments; and long before his grandfather had even thought of going to his room, while he was still walking restlessly up and down the library floor, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his head drooped forward upon his breast, he had fallen fast asleep upon his tear-wet pillow.

Poor Charlie! No wonder that the Doctor's brave heart trembled as he thought of his future; for the battle of life lay before him, and all his most trusty weapons were broken by misuse, or rusted by idleness and want of care.

### III.

#### A STRONG PURPOSE WELL BROKEN.

THE morning sunlight fell softly down through the waving branches of the old willow, hour after hour; the Doctor, after keeping his appointment with James Harland, and making good to him the losses which he had sustained at the hands of his grandson, went out on his long round of visits. Aunt Harriet left the sunny sitting-room, and sat down with her work in the more shaded library; the sun rose higher and higher in the cloudless sky, until it was full noon, and still Charlie lay beneath the window, thinking. Caspar, after many vain attempts to rouse him, had trotted off long ago in search of amusement, for he found his playmate's usually agreeable society exceedingly dull in his present mood; and yet Charlie lay, his hands clasped beneath his head, thinking. And the burden of his thoughts—thoughts deeper, fuller, more strongly moving than any which had ever busied heart and brain in all the thirteen years of his life—ran incessantly on those words of his grandfather,—‘I can never despair of the boy.’

If he had not seen him as he had seen him on the past night, bowed and broken beneath the terrible feeling of shame which he, in his own utter want of that keen sense of honour which made a false word or act a thing so abhorrent and debasing in Dr. Mason's eyes, could not even comprehend, those words, and the firm tone of strong faith and reliance in which they were spoken,

might not have made so great an impression upon him. But having been a witness to the intensity of his grandfather's grief over his sin, the strength of his brave faith in him touched the boy as nothing else could possibly have done.

By and by, lifting his eyes as an inquisitive little sun-beam peeped right into his face between the green branches beneath which he lay, he noticed for the first time that the morning was passing quickly by.

'High noon!' he said, looking up to the sky in amazement. 'Why, what a dream I've been in, to be sure! And the next thing, dinner will be ready, I suppose, and then there'll be Aunt Harriet to face with her Sunday-go-to-meeting look on, as starchy and stiff as a Shaker's cap. I'll be off!'

Springing from his couch of soft turf, he flung aside the drooping boughs and stepped out upon the road, giving a low musical whistle for his dog as he glanced around, missing him from his side. Miss Harriet heard the whistle, and came to the library window as Charlie sauntered past that side of the house.

'Charlie! Charlie!'

The boy walked on regardless of the call.

'Don't go away, Charlie. It is almost dinner-time.'

Still he went on as if he were deaf, without noticing his aunt in any way, until he had gone quite out of the reach of her voice. Miss Harriet turned back to her work with a heavy sigh; and he, when he was quite sure that he was out of sight and hearing, sat himself down on a great stone on the bank of the brook to which his wandering feet had led him, and began to pick up the pebbles which lay around him, and fling them into the water with almost vicious force.

'Dinner !' he muttered at length, when he had for some moments been exercising his restless energies in this way. 'I don't want to see any dinner for a month. Old pest ! I wish her dinner would choke her.'

And then he laughed at his own violence ; and then —then he turned his face and hid it in the grass for a long long while : and even Caspar, who had rushed to find him at his call, could not induce him by any canine demonstrations of affection to raise it. No, not even Caspar must see it now ; for Charlie was a proud little fellow, and he felt himself at thirteen years old almost a man.

The sun had passed the meridian, and was moving toward the west, when the boy lifted himself up again. A great change had come over the face which had lain hidden from sight for those two long hours. When it had bent itself to the friendly shade of the long waving grass which received it so tenderly, hiding its weakness, its pain, and its irresolute desire with a soft fragrant veil, and whispering to no living ear of the briny dew which fell fast upon its slender blades, it had been the face of a doubtful, troubled, anxious child ; when it was raised to the light once more, it bore the impress of a fixed strong purpose,—a manly, brave determination.

He sat very still for a while ; then rising to his feet, he said, 'Come, Caspar, let's go and tell Hattie ;' and set off with a brisk step in the direction of Lindon Hill.

His own home was situated in the village, Dr. Mason's practice making it necessary for him to be as near as possible to the centre of the large district in which he was the favourite practitioner ; and the Hill lay about a mile to the westward of Lindon village. But the two

friends were not long in crossing the distance which lay between them and the place of their destination.

Passing in through the open gateway,—for the beautiful grounds of the Hill were free to all visitors, the gates being unclosed from sunrise until twilight, — Charlie walked quickly up the main road, and was passing on directly to the house, when far away on his left, through the branches of a trailing honeysuckle which threw its long tendrils over a rustic arbour that opened on a narrow footpath, he saw the gleam of something white ; and instantly diverted from his purpose of going to the house, turned his steps that way, morally certain that the object of his search would be found there.

There was not a sound to be heard within the arbour as he approached it ; and laying his hand on Caspar's collar to prevent him from springing forward and startling the quiet occupant, he went up the footpath, and looked in at the open arch. It was a pretty picture that he saw, so pretty that he did not care to disturb it by a motion or a word.

Curled up on the rustic seat, one slender foot peeping out from beneath her white dress, her head, supported on her hand, bent low over a book which lay in her lap, with flushed cheeks and parted lips, and rapt, unconscious face, Hattie Raymond was indeed a pretty picture.

'Hattie,' Charlie said at last ; 'Hattie !'

Still she did not look up. He had spoken very softly, but now he laughed his merry ringing laugh, and in a moment the book was thrown down, and she sprang up to welcome him.

'Oh, Charlie ! Did they send you down here ? I thought they didn't know where I was. I came off by myself to have a good time with the *Heir of Redclyffe*,

and didn't tell any one where I was going to hide myself. But I'm glad you found me out. Have you read it ?'

'Yes, I read it last winter when I sprained my foot, and was keeled up for a fortnight. Don't you remember ?'

'Yes, I remember. Isn't it perfectly lovely ? But they make Guy die, and I think that's a shame.'

'How do you know they do ? You're not a quarter of the way through the book.'

'Oh, I looked at the end. I can't help it,' she added, with a laugh at the expression of Charlie's face. 'I never can stand reading an interesting book through without looking to see how they all come out. If I don't, I grow so excited over it, and my face is red, and my hands are cold, and I feel all shaky and trembly ; its perfectly horrid. But when I look at the end, and make my mind comfortable about my people (for they almost always turn out all right, you know), then I can go on with some comfort, and I have time to notice all the pretty little thoughts in the book, and enjoy them.'

'But there's no interest in it when you know how it closes,' objected Charlie.

'Oh yes, there is. I know that all this trouble between Guy and Philip ends in peace and friendship, but I want to find out how it is brought about ; and I know that Guy succeeds in controlling that awful temper of his, and I am just as interested as can be to read how he struggles and fights with himself. Oh, Charlie, I do think it is splendid for anybody to fight it out with such a dreadful fault, and come off conqueror ! I think it's grand, even in a book !'

Her face was all aglow with her young enthusiasm,

but Charlie only stood and looked at her ; he did not attempt to speak. Something in the expression of his face caught her attention, and she moved quickly forward, and laid her hand on his arm, as she said,—

‘What is the matter, Charlie ? You haven’t looked like yourself since you came in ; and now—what is it, Charlie, boy ? tell me. Don’t stand looking at me like that. It makes me want to cry.’

‘No, don’t cry,’ said the boy, as a premonitory quiver in her voice warned him of danger. ‘There’s nothing to cry about, or at least not for you. I came up here to tell you something, Hattie—a plan of mine that nobody else knows anything about ; and you must keep it a secret.’

She looked him straight in the face before she answered him. Apparently what she saw there satisfied her, for she said slowly,—

‘Go on, Charlie.’

‘And you will not tell any one ; nor speak of it, even to Grandpa ?’

‘Not if it is as good a secret as your face seems to say it is. And if it is not, I will never tell any one but him.’

‘I am going to run away from home.’

‘Why ?—Charlie Mason !’

She fairly gasped the words. To tell her such a secret as that, when she had just warned him that she could hide no wrong-doing from his grandfather ! What could he mean ? And yet he looked so bright, and strong, and brave, as if he felt that he was right, and nothing could move him ; as her hero, Guy Morville, might have looked when, with resolute, undaunted purpose, he had determined to call in every power and



force of his whole nature to combat the great, overmastering fault of his character.

He did not answer her exclamation of surprise, but stood as if waiting for her to speak again.

'I don't understand,' she said, after a moment's silence. 'Sit down here, and tell me what you mean. Why, Charlie, you'd break our dear old Doctor's heart if you ran away from home.'

'I shall break it if I stay here, that's certain, if I haven't done it already. I suppose you haven't heard about last night?'

'No: did you fall into trouble with Aunt Harriet again?'

'I fell into trouble with everybody. Aunt Harriet is the least part of it. She's been looking daggers at me every time I gave her a chance, since she heard it; but I don't care for her. Grandpa is all my trouble; and if you'd seen his face last night, you wouldn't wonder.'

She knew Charlie well enough to be quite sure that he had been engaged in some very serious piece of mischief. Mr. Raymond and Dr. Mason were the closest and most intimate friends; and these five past years had made the daughter of the one and the grandson of the other almost as dear to one another. Hattie's friendship had been no small blessing to Charlie, nor had Charlie been alone the gainer by their intimacy. The nervous and excitable girl had learned calmness and self-control from the quiet, common-sense view taken by the boy of matters and things around them; and the little lady, with her refined manners and delicate perceptions, self-possession, and pretty ways, was the best of all companions for the rough, untutored lad who had suddenly been placed in the position of the son of a

gentleman. She was very fond of him, and very sorry for him, appreciating far better than did Miss Harriet the difficulties which beset his path. Watching his face now, in its pain, her own grew grave, and tender too, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she said,—

‘Tell it all to me, Charlie. It will do you good.’

—So he told it all, honestly and faithfully, hiding nothing, —the story of the night expedition, and of his own share in it; of Harland’s accusation, and his bold denial; of his grandfather’s searching question, his false answer, and Dr. Mason’s consequent distress. Not even the Doctor himself could have recited the whole occurrence more truthfully. Then he looked up into Hattie’s pale, shocked face, and waited for her comments upon his tale. It was very little that she said in words, only,—

‘Oh, Charlie, dear! I thought you had grown up far above this long ago.’

And then her voice broke, and she laid her head down on his shoulder, and cried so bitterly that it was very hard work not to help her a little.

But after a while she lifted up her wet face, and dashing off her tears, said, ‘Tell me the rest, Charlie—about your running away, I mean. Why should you do that?’

‘Because,’ said Charlie determinately, ‘in spite of Grandpa’s feeling so awfully last night, he half trusts me yet. I heard him tell Aunt Harriet this morning that he could never despair of me! “Never,” he said, “never.” And I tell you, Hattie, he shan’t either. I’ve often thought I was sorry for being bad before; but I never knew what sorry meant until this morning—not even last night. To think he’d hold on to me, even when his heart was most breaking over me! Never despair of me! I’ll just wager he shan’t! I’m going

off to-night, Hattie, and I shall never come back until I've made a man of myself ; a true, honourable gentleman ; a man he'll be proud to call his grandson ; a man whose word shall be as good as his bond. He shall never need to ask me again, as he did last night, "What is your word ?"'

He had left her side, and was walking excitedly up and down the harbour. As he ceased speaking, she rose and joined him. Linking her arm in his, she walked with him, gradually quieting him by the touch of her hand on his arm, and by her slower movements, until he had grown calm again. Then she said, in her grave, womanly little way,—

'I'm very glad and proud for you, Charlie ; very glad and proud that you have made this grand resolution ; but it seems to me that it is a great mistake for you to leave home in this way. It will be twice as hard for you to do right, fighting on all alone and forsaken, than if you were at home with your grandfather. He will be such a help to you.'

'So he would if he were the only one there ; but, Hattie, I can never do right with Aunt Harriet near me. She's at me from morning till night, poking at me to make a good boy of me, and I can't stand it. And she makes such a fuss over everything ! Why, if I leave my hat on a chair in the hall, instead of hanging it on the hat-rack, she makes as big a row over it as Grandpa would over—my telling a lie,' he added in a low voice, after a moment's hesitation.

'It isn't a bit of use,' he went on, after a pause, 'for me to try to do anything with her around. I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of seeing me try to be a better sort of fellow, in the first place ; I wouldn't if I could,

but I couldn't any way. I know, Hattie, for I've tried it. Bad as I am, I have tried some to please Grandpa ; and no sooner do I get ahead a little, than she's got to prate about it, and if I make a slip, take notice of it, and say I don't seem to be trying much, after all, or something like that. You don't know anything about it ; for I do think she really hates me. You're her namesake, and she cares for you ; but even so you know she half bothers your life out of you when you come down to our house. Now, don't she ?'

'Why, of course she's fidgety and fussy,' said Hattie, with a laugh. 'But she's good to me for all. And she's good to you too, Charlie. Nobody could be more careful for your comfort.'

'Oh, no ! I suppose not,' said Charlie rather irritably. 'She keeps the buttons sewed on, and the stockings darned, and all that sort of thing neat and comfortable. But— It's no use talking about it, Hattie. I'm going to run away. I must do it, if I ever mean to learn to do right.'

'And you will never learn to do right if you begin by doing wrong,' replied the girl very gravely. 'Do you expect to comfort your poor grandfather's aching heart by hurting him again ? You will be doing him a great injury, Charlie.'

She was only a year older than himself, but her influence with him was very strong ; and for the first time since he had come into the arbour, his determined look changed to one of doubt and irresolution.

'Shall I tell you what I would do ?' she asked, as she saw the momentary hesitation in his face. 'I would go right to Dr. Mason, and ask him to send me to boarding-school, and to send me at once.'

'To boarding-school !' exclaimed Charlie in dismay, for this was his especial horror. 'That is just what Aunt Harriet would like. It's what she's been putting Grandpa up to ever since I came here. I wouldn't go for anything.'

'Then you are less in earnest than I thought,' said Hattie quietly.

'Do you mean to say that you don't think I'm in earnest in wanting to make a true, honourable man of myself ?' exclaimed Charlie, with a sudden flash of temper.

'I mean to say,' replied Hattie gently, 'that if you are quite determined to make your grandfather happy, you will not begin by doing him a cruel wrong. If you go away from home without his knowledge, you must of course work for your own support, and you will have no time to educate yourself, and fit yourself'—

'Other fellows have grown up from mere working boys into the greatest men that ever lived,' Charlie interrupted triumphantly. 'Why shouldn't I ?'

'They grew up into such noble men because they made the most of all their advantages, while you want to throw yours all away, and begin to try to raise yourself by sinking yourself lower. Oh, Charlie, dear, I don't want to discourage you, I want to help you ; but this plan of yours is all wrong—I know it is. Why won't you go right home, and tell the Doctor all about it ?'

It was rather hard. It had seemed such a grand exploit to march off alone, and, taking the world by storm, earn such a name for himself as would fill his grandfather's heart with pride and joy when, years hence, he should come back to him, a man of noble fame and honour. And what was this new plan which Hattie

offered in its stead ? A tame, common-place life in a boarding-school, toiling slowly day by day up the ladder of learning, striving there to do all the work within himself which he had intended to do grappling hand to hand with the world. It was a terrible fall. But, after all, was not Hattie right ? He sat, and thought and thought, the girl resting silent beside him the while ; and at last, —being thoroughly in earnest, poor boy ! in his great desire to be worthy of his grandfather's faith and trust in him,—turned his averted face toward his companion, and laid his hand in hers.

‘I'll do it, Hattie,’ he said ; ‘but I tell you, it's just the toughest job I ever did in all my life. And oh !’ with a great sigh, as if the loss came home to his very heart, ‘I'll have to give up Caspar too.’

‘Will you let me keep him for you ?’ said Hattie, as if the matter were entirely settled.

‘Oh ! will you keep him ? Aunt Harriet does bother him so, and I shan't be there to stand up for him, you see.’

And then, feeling that he did not care to trust himself to talk much more, Charlie said ‘Good-bye’ more gently than was his wont, and walked slowly down the hill towards home.

#### IV.

##### DAYBREAK.

‘CHARLIE! Charlie! Go back and wipe your feet!’

The long walk home through the sweet summer twilight, with his heart full to overflowing with his new hopes and plans, had brought a look of unwonted quiet and repose to Charlie’s face. As he had neared the house, firmly fixed now in his resolve to relinquish his own first determination, and in its stead to follow out Hattie’s wiser but less pleasant suggestion, he had glanced up to see if his grandfather were seated in his favourite corner near the library window; and as his eyes rested on the white head leaning against the dark background of the great arm-chair, which was Dr. Mason’s especial property, they brightened with eagerness, and with a leap and a bound he sprang up the steps and into the doorway.

How the light and the gladness faded as Aunt Harriet’s voice fell on his ear! With a very unusual attention to her wishes, growing out of his tenderness for his grandfather, he had paused at the threshold, for once remembering the oft-repeated and sharply-urged injunction to wipe his dusty feet upon the door-mat before entering the house. With a slower step he passed into the hall, making no reply to Miss Harriet’s quick call.

‘Charlie, go right back,’ she said, meeting him as he

turned towards the library. 'Ellen has waxed the halls and the stairs, and I will not have them soiled by your dusty boots.'

Oh, harsh, impatient words, hastily spoken to those who are in fault! How often they turn back the first waves of penitence and contrition, as they come rolling gently in after the tempest of passion and sin has passed over the soul of a child!

Without deigning a word in reply, Charlie turned abruptly toward the stairs, not choosing to say that he had already attended to her wishes, and went up to his room; his purpose of unfolding all his desires and hopes to his grandfather changed to a strong inclination to carry out at once his first hasty and ill-formed resolution to run away from home, and fight his own way through the world.

With a hopeless shrug of her shoulders, and a whispered 'Was there ever such a torment?' Miss Harriet went into the dining-room to see if supper were ready; and finding it already upon the table, sent the servant up to Charlie's room to call him down.

'I can't get no answer, Miss Harriet,' said he, returning after some moments' delay. 'Master Charlie has gone out again, perhaps. I knocked twice, and he did not open the door.'

'Is the door locked, Reuben?'

'Yes'm; and I didn't hear a breath when I listened for him. He might be asleep, may happen. If ye'd let him rest, ma'am, I could get him a bite after a bit, when he wakens.'

To tell the truth, old Reuben, a privileged servant in the family, which he had served for the past fifty years, boy and man, with unfailing fidelity, had a suspicion of



the true state of affairs, and, always ready to shield the boy whom he loved, first for his mother's sake, and then for his own, had not urged Miss Harriet's desire with any great vehemence.

'I wish him to come down at once,' said his mistress. 'Go up again, Reuben, and tell him that we are waiting for him.'

'Master Charlie, dear,' said Reuben, a moment later, with his lips at the key-hole of the closed door, after knocking in vain for admittance, 'Miss Harriet bids you to come down. And the doctor's wantin' his tea, and waitin' for ye.'

Still no answer.

'Master Charlie, you won't go for to fret your grandfather no more the day, sure. Come down, sir, and see what a nate pickin' I laid by for ye from the dinner. There's some salmon, and a bit of cold chicken, and such a pasty as 'll make your mouth water to see it just. Nancy made it a purpose for ye. Come down now, there's a fine lad.'

The door burst suddenly open, and Charlie stood before it, his eyes flashing, and his whole face in a blaze of wrath.

'Take yourself down-stairs this minute!' he exclaimed in a fury of passion. 'Didn't you see that my door was locked because I didn't choose to be disturbed?'

'But, Master Charlie, dear,' pleaded old Reuben, shrinking back before the storm which threatened him, 'Miss Harriet bade me bring you for sure.'

'What do I care for Miss Harriet's bidding? Go down and tell her'—

'Charlie Mason!'

The voice came up the stairs, and as it came he caught

the sound of his grandfather's step crossing the hall toward the dining-room. The flush faded from his face as the warning tone fell on his ear ; and without another word he turned back into his room, quietly closing the door behind him.

'Well ?' said Miss Harriet, as Reuben re-entered the dining-room.

'I think Master Charlie's not wantin' any supper, ma'am. He bade me not disturb him,' said the old man, with a careful softening of the facts of the case.

'I would not call him again, Harriet,' said her father, as, with a deepened colour and a look of strong irritation, she rose from her seat.

'But he has eaten no dinner, father. He will surely be sick if he goes on in this way.' And she turned to him with an expression of some anxiety on her face, for it was a sore distress to Miss Harriet to have her nice viands unappreciated ; and, in addition to the vexation caused her by Charlie's insubordination, she was really made unhappy by his refusal to eat. 'He has not taken a mouthful since breakfast.'

'One day's fast will not hurt him, dear ; I think that I would leave him to himself.'

Dr. Mason's manner of making a suggestion in a case like this was in itself a command, and Miss Harriet seldom thought of opposing her will to his. Her father was the very idol of her heart ; and, to do her justice, her hard feeling towards Charlie was greatly owing to her intense affection for the Doctor. Devoted, body and mind, to his service and comfort, she resented the anxiety and the grief which Charlie caused him with angry bitterness, and thought no severity and harshness too great to be used toward one who, in spite of the care

and love lavished upon him, could wantonly bring a cloud upon her father's beloved face.

'Harriet, my dear.'

'Yes, father.'

They had returned to the library, and Dr. Mason was sitting in his corner by the window, taking a little rest preparatory to starting out once more on his round. As his daughter spoke, she left her seat, and coming up behind him, began to toy with his hair,—an old habit of hers, and one in which he greatly delighted. Looking up at her now with a smile, he took in his own the hand which was threading its fingers through the snowy locks, and, drawing her forward until her face met his own, said,—

'My dear, I want to talk to you about our boy. I don't think that you quite understand him.'

'And you think that I am unkind and cross and unwise with him,' said Miss Harriet, her pale face flushing as she spoke. 'You are quite right. But, father,' and her voice faltered a little, 'perhaps I try to bear with him more than you think I do, judging from the results of my efforts.'

'I know you do, my dear ; and I know how sorely he often tests your patience. I have noticed—and I thanked you for it in my heart, my dear, as I thank you more plainly for it now,'—and he drew her face down upon his breast, and kissed it,—'I have noticed that you have not reproached him for last night's escapade. It was better so, much better : reproaches would only have vexed and hardened him. But, my dear, if you could be more patient with the trifles, Charlie would, I think, be less headstrong and obstinate with regard to your wishes. You speak to him with the same severity when he fails,

through forgetfulness or carelessness, to attend to some minor duty, as you would use in blaming him for a heinous offence. Ah, Harriet, my dear, if you had seen the bright, eager, yet half-uncertain deprecating face which caught my eye as Charlie sprang up the steps this evening, it would have grieved you to the soul, as it did me, to have listened to the sullen, heavy tread with which he crossed the hall, and to have heard the defiant tone in which he answered your summons to the tea-table. If I have any power in reading human faces, that boy came home penitent, and hopeful of a better future. I think that the sudden lighting of his face when he saw me was the promise of good things for us all. I may be wrong, my child, in my surmises ; but the step with which he went up the stairs was painfully changed from that with which he bounded up to the piazza ; and I doubt the face was as sadly changed as the tread.

‘He must necessarily be checked in so many ways,’ the Doctor went on, after a pause for an answer which he did not receive, ‘that if we reprove him for all his less grave faults, he will hardly hear us speak of anything but misdemeanours from week’s end to week’s end ; and that will be very hard upon him, if he hates to be found fault with as much as his grandfather does. Suppose we try, my little girl,’—and he stroked the dark hair, already lightly touched with grey, as tenderly as if she had been the little child he called her,—‘to pass over all these minor annoyances and irregularities indulgently and kindly.’

‘You would not have him grow up a rough unpolished man, father ?’ said his daughter, lifting her head to look into the face of the courtly old gentleman, in whose eyes she knew that a breach of good manners was intolerable.

He took the upturned face in his hands, looking long into it before he answered her. 'Harriet,' he said at last, and his voice was so deep and solemn that the tears rose in her eyes as they gazed into his, 'if our boy grows up into a man who is worthy to be called a man at all, I shall feel that God has been very good to us. Let us help him, my dear, with all our strength, for the battle will be hard and long, and he is not fitted for the strife. With patient helpful hands let us lead him up the difficult path ; with glad joyous voices let us welcome every advancing step ; with lips quick to praise and slow to blame, let us cheer him on his toilsome way. For, Harriet, my dear, you and I do not know the strength of his temptations, nor the power of that evil life to which he has been trained.'

Miss Harriet made no reply ; but when, a little later, the Doctor had gone out, she crept softly up to Charlie's room, and peeped cautiously in at the door. He was lying on the bed, as if he had thrown himself down in weariness, and had fallen asleep with one arm thrown carelessly above his head, the hand nestled in his brown curls. But as she stole nearer to him, she saw that his face was flushed, and his hair lay in damp masses over his forehead, as if it had been tossed and disordered in a fit of impatience. She could easily imagine him wandering restlessly about his room, and finally flinging himself angrily down upon the bed, chafing and fretting against herself, and dropping off to sleep when his passion had spent itself. She had seen him in such turns before, and had calmly watched him through them without one sympathizing word or look. But to-night she was in a softer mood.

For a few moments she stood watching him with a

grave, troubled face ; then she bent down, and lifted the heavy hair from the damp forehead as gently as his mother might have touched it. The boy stirred and muttered in his sleep, and Miss Harriet sped away as if she were afraid to encounter the glance of his waking eyes. The touch had roused him from his light slumber. He raised his head, and looked about him ; then rose, and with slow, hesitating movements, as if he were not quite decided whether to do so or not, began to prepare himself to go to bed in earnest.

But the short sleep into which he had fallen seemed to have broken his rest. Hour after hour he lay there, listening to the different sounds in the house, until all was still. He heard the servants go up to their rooms ; then his grandfather came in, very late ; and shortly after, Aunt Harriet, who always waited for him, went up-stairs, leaving him below. Four hours he had lain there since at nine o'clock he had gone to bed—four long, thoughtful, quiet hours ; and now he knew that his grandfather was alone, and that he might go to him and tell him all that was in his heart, and there would be no one to disturb him. Should he go down ? Should he resolve, once for all, to make a bold stand for the right, and ask his grandfather's help and counsel ?

For more than an hour Dr. Mason had been sitting before the bright wood-fire in the library. The night was damp and cool, and coming in somewhat chilled and tired, he had put a match to the logs, which lay ready on the hearth, and established himself before them to enjoy the soft warmth. As the silence of night had settled down over the house, his thoughts had gone up to the boy who lay in the room above him, asleep, as he supposed. He had turned over in his mind a hundred

plans for his good, none of which seemed to fit the case in all its bearings; and at last, with a sigh over his doubt and perplexity, he rose to go to his room. As he moved, he caught the sound of a step behind him, and turned quickly, somewhat startled, knowing that all the different members of the family had retired long ago.

'Charlie! Why, my son, what are you doing here at this time of night? It is nearly two o'clock.'

'I know it, Grandpa; but I wanted to tell you—I wanted to say—Oh, Grandpa, I'm so sorry I am so bad!'

Dr. Mason laid his hand on the boy's head as he bent it to hide his quivering face; but he did not say a word to stay the tide of his repentant grief. After a little he drew him to the sofa, sitting down beside him there, but still he did not speak. By and by Charlie lifted up his face, and glanced timidly at him. He was looking steadily at the bright logs on the hearth, beating gently with one hand upon the arm of the sofa, and did not turn to meet the troubled eyes which were raised toward him.

'Do believe me, Grandpa; I am true this time,' faltered the boy. 'I can't say "on my word," nor "on my honour," for you think I have neither; but I do mean what I say. Oh, Grandpa, do look at me, and listen to me!'

'Listen to you, my son?' said Dr. Mason, as if wakened from a reverie. 'My heart has been listening for you all day long, Charlie.'

He laid his hand on his head again, and, bending it a little back, looked down into his face.

'Believe you!' he said. 'Oh, if you only knew how



'Oh, Grandpa, I'm so sorry I am so bad!' - *Pigeon* 12.





I long to believe you ! And I do ; yes, I do, my boy. You cannot mean to deceive me now ; I know you cannot.'

Charlie nestled close within the clasp of the arm which was thrown around him. Neither spoke for a few moments. The boy broke the silence at length by asking abruptly,—

'Grandpa, would it cost a great deal of money to send me away to some school where they look out pretty smartly for the fellows ?'

'No,' said Dr. Mason, very much surprised. 'Do you want to go to boarding-school ?'

'I want to go away,' replied Charlie, speaking very slowly. 'At least, I want to try my very best to do right ; and I think I'd do better away from all the fellows I've been cutting up with, and away from—from Aunt Harriet,' he broke out bluntly. 'I don't mean to excuse myself,' he went on rapidly, 'for I know I'm as bad as I can be ; but I do think, Grandpa, that it's a great deal harder for a fellow to do right in great things, when he's dinned at from morning till night about a whole pile of little things that he can't possibly remember. I'm sorry I plague her so sometimes ; but then, again, to tell the real truth, I'm often glad of it, and just run foul of her to torment her. But, any way, it keeps me in a fret all the while. And then there are all those fellows that I've got in with, too, as I said before. If I could be away from them, I think I'd run a better chance of—of—keeping up your faith in me. That's what's the matter with me, Grandpa. I heard you tell Aunt Harriet that you would never despair of me ; and you shan't ; indeed, indeed, you shan't !'

As the head, which had been lifted from his shoulder

as the boy spoke, nestled down again to its place, Dr. Mason stroked it tenderly.

'What put this idea into your mind?' he asked.  
'Was it your own thought?'

Charlie coloured with the sudden appreciation of the distress which his first plan would have brought to his grandfather.

'It's rather a long story,' said he; 'but I'd like to tell you about the whole day, if you're not too tired to listen.'

'I would sit up until sunrise to know what you have thought and felt to-day,' said the Doctor.

So the story was told,—how, lying beneath the old willow, he had heard the conversation between his grandfather and his aunt, and how it had touched him to the very heart to find that, bitter as had been his grandfather's grief over his sin, he could yet trust in him; how, vexed with Aunt Harriet, he had deliberately disobeyed her; how, delighted with his own plan for a new and better life, he had gone with it to Hattie Raymond for her sympathy and aid, and how she had disappointed him and changed his purpose; how he had come home penitent, and eager at once to give his grandfather the comfort of knowing that he was both sorrowful and hopeful; and how he had yet, on slight temptation, yielded to his pride and passion.

Nothing was hidden, veiled, or even extenuated. Dr. Mason, sitting beside him, looking steadily down into the upturned earnest face, saw that, for once at least, the boy was telling the whole truth.

The morning light was breaking in the east when the story was ended.

'See,' said the Doctor, a smile rippling the grave lines

of his face as Charlie ceased speaking ; ‘ there is my hope in you, Charlie. So far it has been but a grey misty light struggling against the surrounding darkness ; but it is brightening now, and, tended by the Master’s careful hand, will kindle into the glory of the perfect day. May “ He who hath begun a good work in you perfect it unto the end ! ” ’

## V.

### CHARLIE'S JOURNEY.

'MY DEAR HATTIE,—I am going to write you a monstrous letter—a perfect rouser ; but you needn't read it all at once if you don't want to. If you are tired of it, throw it overboard until you are rested, and then begin at it again. The reason why it must be so long is, because I'll have to tell you all about my journey, for it was such jolly good fun. I couldn't help wishing all the while that you were along, for you'd have liked it first-rate. That Mr. Braisted, under whose care Grandpa put me, is a right good fellow, and just the best sort of a chap to travel with ; for he's been everywhere, and knows everything, and can answer any question you choose to ask him. By the way, he and Grandpa played a trick on me, for when we reached Melville I found,—but no, I won't tell you yet what I did find. You'll know before you come to the end of the letter.

'We only went as far as New York the first day, because Mr. Braisted had some business to attend to there. We got in about ten o'clock, and took an omnibus at the depot to ride down town. A lot of other people jumped into the same stage, until we were stowed away as close as sardines in a box ; and then a man who was standing at the door banged it shut, and away we went. It was an awfully tight squeeze ; and an old woman, who sat next me, kept poking me in the ribs with the end of her umbrella, which she couldn't seem

to manage. I was thinking of asking her what she meant to do with my bones when she'd pried them out ; but seeing that she had a bag and a basket and an enormous bundle to take care of besides the umbrella, I let her poke, and bore it like a man.

'You never saw such a funny place as this New York in all your life. The houses are packed tight together in long rows, with a mean little bit of grass in front by way of a garden, line after line of them from street to street,—that is, the dwelling-houses, I mean. But wait till you get down town if you want to see packing. There they haven't even a blade of grass, or a tree, or anything but brick and stone. And the people hurry about, and push and jostle one another so ; they rush around as if somebody were dreadfully sick, and they'd all been sent off on the run for the doctor. And there's scarcely a womankind to be seen down there—all men, and perfect heaps of them. But I liked it first-rate. I think it must be jolly to fly around so, and feel so busy and so big. I wish I lived in New York. Then there's lots to see, too. Some of the stores and banks and churches are splendid ; and Mr. Braisted pointed out all the handsome ones, and told me who they belonged to, and the names of them. I asked him to tell me softly, because all the other fellows in the omnibus looked so knowing that I did not want them to see I was a green-horn. So he did ; he's nice, I tell you.

'But you never saw such cubby-holes as some of the offices down town are. Little bits of rooms, so dark that in lots of them they burn the gas all day long, and so dusty, musty, rusty, that you can't seem to believe that they make such heaps of money in them. But they do ; and one of these days I'm going to live in New York,

and have a little dark office, and pile up money, and build a beautiful house for Grandpa, and never let him work any more, but just sit in a splendid library, with books all bound in blue and gold, and read all day long.

'When Mr. Braisted had finished up his business, he asked me if I'd rather go up to Central Park, or down to the wharves to see the shipping. I chose the ships, of course; and off we went, after we'd had our lunch, to the piers. There's a new steamer lying at New York, called the "Parthia." She's a boat, and no mistake. Before I came off of her, I'd almost made up my mind to be a sea-captain instead of a broker, and I don't know but I may yet. She's a regular beauty, and I couldn't bear to go ashore again and leave her. But our time was up before I was half through looking at her, and of course we had to go.

'The boat left at six o'clock, so we had our tea on board. It was jolly to sit down in the saloon, and order just what you wanted. If ever you go, take devilled crabs; they're prime. I saw the name on the bill of fare, and ordered them because the name was so queer; and I thought it sounded rather nice to say, too, as if I knew a thing or two, you know. But, oh, wasn't I tired after we went up-stairs? Don't you tell anybody, but if it hadn't looked babyish, I should have liked to have gone right to bed. Mr. Braisted took me all over the boat, and showed me the machinery and everything, and explained it so that I could understand how it went. It was so interesting that it waked me up again; but when we went out on deck, and sat down, I didn't know how I was going to keep my eyes open. Of course I didn't want him to see I was sleepy, because it looked

so young and green, and I tried my best to fight it out.

'By and by he asked me if I was tired, and said I seemed to be growing so still. I said I was thinking; and so I was, thinking how nice bed would feel. But I thought it would be kind of grand to sit up until twelve o'clock. I wanted to make a good impression on these chaps here, and I thought it would be a good thing to say, in a careless sort of way, you know, that the night had been so fine we had not left the deck until midnight. It seemed to me I was just thinking how well that would sound, and wishing that midnight would hurry up, when Mr. Braisted put his hand on me.

"I'm not asleep, sir," said I, jumping up. "Down, Caspar!"

'For, as my hand moved, I felt something shaggy, and thought it was Caspar's coat. Oh, how Mr. Braisted did laugh!

"That is not Caspar," said he, "but my shawl. I threw it over you lest you should take cold. Caspar is safe at home in Lindon."

'Didn't I feel too cheap! I couldn't say a word.

"You've been asleep for an hour," said Mr. Braisted after a minute; "and now I think you had better go down to the state-room. You will take cold out here, the air is growing so fresh."

'Of course I went, for I felt too much cut up to say anything, and in five minutes was in my berth, and knew nothing more until we touched the Fall River dock next morning.

'Then came the best part of the journey,—the ride on the top of the stage-coach, from Fall River to Melville. It was a lovely, cool day, and the road runs right up



through the mountains, over such high ground that we caught the full sweep of the brisk wind. Oh, it was grand! Mr. Braisted liked it too, only that his seat was next to a man who had a sick-headache. I whispered to him that I'd change with him; for he got so pale every time the man felt qualmy that I was afraid he'd be ill too; but he wouldn't do it. The coachman watched the poor fellow with the greatest concern, and by and by he said, shaking his head as gravely as a judge,—

“It's awful bad to have the sick-headache when you're going to coach it, for one never knows what's a comin'.”

‘I just roared. Mr. Braisted tried hard to hold in, but his lips quivered and twitched, and his eyes danced like two fire-flies; and then he couldn't stand it another minute, but broke out into the merriest laugh you ever heard. Old coachee was as mad as a hornet for a moment; but he got over it after a while, and told us lots of impossible yarns, which we pretended to swallow all in good faith, and we parted at the Melville Seminary the best possible friends.

‘And here comes my story. When we opened the gate, and went into the grounds of the seminary, it was mid-day, and I saw a lot of fellows out on the lawn playing ball. In a minute there was a shout and a rush, and down they all pelted, big boys and little boys together, in one big crowd, swarming around Mr. Braisted, shaking hands with him, holding fast to his arms, to his coat, anything they could get hold of, as if they were going mad over him.

‘And what do you think it all meant? Why, he is the principal of this school; and the reason that neither he nor Grandpa told me was because he wanted to get

acquainted with me, and he thought I'd be shy of him if I knew who he was. He is acquainted with me, and no mistake ; for he was such an easy kind of a fellow to make friends with, that I talked to him as if he was another youngster, and told him how much I knew, and how much I didn't know too ; and what I wanted to do with myself, and how I was going to try to make such a man of myself as Grandpa might be proud of, and all about it ; only that I didn't tell him how bad I am. I'm glad now that I didn't know who he was, for I feel real easy with him as it is ; and if I'd been told that I was to make this long journey with the principal of the school, I suppose I'd have felt awfully poky and stiff, and wouldn't have grown acquainted at all.

‘Now I must tell you some about the school. I thought it was a very small affair, and I suppose it is as boys' boarding-schools go ; but there's quite a pile of fellows here after all. Twenty of us, all told. Two classes ; one of big chaps, sixteen to fourteen years old ; and my class. We run from eleven to thirteen, but there's only one elevener. He's a small chap, the youngest of the lot, and very little for his age, but the very pluckiest youngster that ever played a match. You ought to have seen him yesterday ! We were all turning somersaults over a heap of sand that happens to lie on the lawn near the road (they are going to fill in a hole in the road with it), and he was trying to do it too, but he couldn't ; his legs being short, he couldn't butt the heap near enough to the top to go safely over. He fell short every time, and at last Will Perkins, the tallest boy in the school, calls out,—

“Stand away there, Harry Clifford ! you'll never do it, and you're in the way.”

‘I thought he’d be mad, for he’s a spicy chap ; but he looked up at Will, and, with a funny nod, says,—

“Yes, I will do it too. I’ll stand out of your way, if you want me to ; but I’ll go over that sand-heap before long, I can tell you.”

‘He turned off, looking as pleasant as could be ; and a minute after I saw him practising by himself on a knoll not far from us. For a whole half-hour that fellow tried it over and over, and at last he did it, half a dozen times in succession. Then he came back where we stood, fell into line, and when his turn came went for the sand-heap. Over he went, as straight as Perkins himself ; and then didn’t those chaps cheer ! I tell you it did me good. I just had to go and shake hands with him.

‘Does that make you think of anything, Hattie ? It does me. A big, steady, hearty fight, and a victory too. Little Clifford has helped me already. He seems to like me, and I’m glad of it, for I like him. I wouldn’t wonder if we were first-rate friends, for we room together, and we get along prime. By the way, Hattie, it isn’t half so hard for me to keep the promise I made you, to say a prayer every night and morning, as I thought it would be ; for Harry says his too, and as we’re the only two in our room, it’s quite convenient. Did you know that Grandpa had put one of those picture-texts in my trunk for me to hang up in my room ? It says—“Him that overcometh . . . I will write upon him my new name.” I am going to hang it at the foot of my bed, so I can see it when I wake up in the morning.

‘I like all the boys pretty well, even Will Perkins. He’s a bully, but he can be nice if he chooses. The other boys give in to him like everything, partly because he’s got lots of money, and treats them if they do, and

partly because they are afraid of him if they don't. I don't think Mr. Braisted knows half what a bully he is, or he'd put a stop to some of his pranks. He never will know, though, for they're all strong on not backing down on any fellow here. They stand by one another through everything. Give lots of love to Grandpa. I wrote to him yesterday. Perhaps I'd better send a little to Aunt Harriet too, for she kissed me when I came away, and she put some candy in my lunch-basket. I think she was kind of sorry, only she didn't want to say so. If she is real sorry, I'll forgive her ; but if she isn't, I won't.

'Don't forget to write to me every week as you promised. I forgot to tell you that another teacher besides Mr. Braisted lives in the house,—Mr. Travers. Grandpa is going to write every week too.—Your dear old

‘CHARLIE.

‘P.S.—How is that for a letter ? I'm tired to death ; how are you ?

‘P.S.—I'm trying, Hattie. True and hearty, I am.’

## VI.

### MR. BRAISTED'S BABY.

CHARLIE'S introduction to his school life had been very propitious. Mr. Braisted, an old friend and college chum of Dr. Mason's, had happened to be making a visit near Lindon at the time of the boy's last disgraceful exploit ; and knowing that, while he was a most genial and kind-hearted man, he was also exceedingly strict and punctilious with regard to the discipline to be maintained in his school, the Doctor went at once to see him, and ask if he would admit Charlie into his establishment. Confiding to Mr. Braisted the story of his grandson's unfortunate early life and training ; his present characteristics, so strongly marked both for good and evil ; and his apparently earnest desire and effort to conquer his grave faults, Dr. Mason had placed him under the care of his old friend, hopeful, as usual, of the very best results from the change.

And Charlie himself was no less sanguine of success. He had had, on the evening before his departure for Melville, a long and serious but very happy talk with the Doctor, and had gone up to his room when it was concluded, with his grandfather's kiss yet lying warm upon his cheek, and his grandfather's parting words of blessing lying as warm upon his heart, more strongly determined than ever to be worthy of his grandfather's name.

Of any higher motive for striving to form a pure and

noble character, Charlie had no thought. He saw plainly (for not even the eye of a careless frolicsome boy could fail to notice it) that Dr. Mason's whole life was influenced and controlled by a power of which he knew nothing in his own experience ; but although through all these past five years he had been lovingly taught of that Friend who was so dear to the old man's heart, he had not chosen Him as his own friend. Even the brightly illuminated words of the beautiful text which Dr. Mason had secretly laid in his trunk, did not bring to his mind any great desire to have the 'new name' written on his forehead. The twining vines and flowers wreathed themselves, as he thought of it, rather about the name of his grandfather than that of the mighty Friend, the love of whom would have been so complete a defence to him in this time of his need.

Charlie had not been mistaken in his estimate of the characters of the two boys in the school who had made the strongest impression upon him in the few days during which he had known them. Good-natured, merry Harry Clifford, with his determination, his earnestness, and his high principles, was the best companion a careless, vacillating boy like Charlie could possibly have had ; and the tie between them bade fair to become both strong and lasting. Within the first six hours after their meeting, Harry had been made aware of the amount of Charlie's allowance, and the value of his possessions in the knife, marble, and twine line. He knew that he had a dog, named Caspar, whom he loved as dog was never loved before ; and an aunt, named Harriet, who occupied exactly the opposite position in his heart ; and before the week was out, he had heard the whole story of his early life and its unhappy results,—his efforts,

his failures, his grandfather's loving trust in his final success, and his own fixed resolution to win the victory for his grandfather's sake ; and more than that, he was pledged by his own voluntary promise to give him all the aid in his power in the accomplishment of his work.

All that Charlie could tell was told, and then Harry returned the compliment, and unfolded his confidences. Like Charlie, he was fatherless ; but he had a mother, and, being her only son and eldest child, felt himself her guard and protector. For the present, he said, he had been forced to leave her to attend to his education ; but as soon as his studies were ended, he intended to return home, and settle down for life in the old homestead. He never meant to marry, but to give up all his days to his widowed mother. His little sisters, he thought, would probably, like all young ladies, leave home when they were grown up, but he should never desert his mother.

There was something very beautiful, even to Charlie's boyish eyes, in this complete devotion. Harry was so slight and delicate in appearance, that it seemed as if his mother might, for many a year, feel the need of watching carefully over him. But he never seemed to doubt for a moment either his ability or his right to support, defend, and watch over her ; and he took such a pride and delight in speaking of himself as her natural protector, that Charlie, in spite of his teasing roguish propensities, had not the heart to laugh at his pretensions.

Less fortunately for himself, Charlie had also, notwithstanding his slighting mention of him in writing to Hattie, formed a close intimacy with William Perkins,

the oldest scholar in the seminary. He was very much what the letter had described him, an open-handed, liberal young fellow, with plenty of money to spend, and great readiness to spend it, not only on himself, but on others as well ; full of life, wit, and resource, but domineering, obstinate, and arrogant as boy could well be. He had taken a fancy at once to Charlie's bright intelligent face, and had admired, petted, and flattered him, until the boy, in spite of his first impressions, was won over completely, and, in a week's time, would have done anything within his ability to aid or to please him ; and the sound of the pet name, 'Brownie,' which Will had bestowed upon him, spoken in Perkin's winning voice, would coax him on the instant from the most enticing game or the most absorbing book.

Harry had taken the greatest delight in showing Charlie everything that was to be seen in the seminary, or around it ; but whatever he exhibited, whether it were the ball-ground, the cricket-field, the best points for fishing in the brook, or some of the many curiosities which Mr. Braisted had collected in years spent in travel, he had always kept before his mind's eye something more rare and beautiful still, which he had yet to place before him as the crowning delight of Melville Seminary. That he was in some way to be hoaxed, Charlie was fully aware ; no one could look into Harry's dancing merry eyes, as he spoke of 'the Great Unknown,' without being quite satisfied that he meant mischief ; but he would give no clue by which his friend might guess what it was that had been so long kept in the background, waiting until he was thoroughly acquainted with all things else about the establishment before it was revealed to his anxious eyes.



'Charlie,' said Harry, one evening, as they sat in the schoolroom, where the boys had all been preparing their lessons for the next day, speaking in a low whisper, 'how would you like to see "the Great Unknown" to-night?'

'First-rate,' said Charlie eagerly. 'Where is it?'

'You sit still a minute, while I go and find it.' And the next moment he had slipped out of the room, only to reappear almost immediately at the door, and beckon him to follow.

'What are you two fellows up to?' called out Will Perkins, as Charlie left his seat.

'Nothing much,' said Harry; 'we'll be back in no time.'

'They have some nonsense on hand,' said Will, as the two disappeared together.

'We'll find our beds sewed up, or our pillows floured, or something. That little Clifford's eyes looked as if they'd dance out of his head. I mean to track them.' And he followed them from the room.

Harry led his companion across the hall, up-stairs, and through a long narrow passage, which led to a small room occupied as an *omnium gatherum* for all the disused maps, charts, school-books, specimens, etc., which had been laid aside from time to time as worn out or worthless. The room was entirely dark, but a faint glimmer of light shone beneath a door on the opposite side from that by which they had entered.

'Do you want to know what you are going to see?' asked Harry in a sepulchral voice.

'I don't think there's much chance of seeing anything in this dungeon,' replied Charlie. 'What have you got to show?'

'Mr. Braisted's baby. But, Charlie,' a sudden thought striking him, 'you're not easily scared, are you?'

'Not I,' laughed Charlie. 'Show up your baby.'

'He's very tall of his age,' said Harry, without moving from his side.

'So he ought to be to pay me for waiting so long for him. Bring on your giraffe, showman!'

'Very well, sir,' said Harry, stepping forward to the door beneath which the line of light showed itself. 'Allow me to introduce—Mr. Braisted's Baby.'

He threw open the door of the closet. For a moment, Charlie's heart seemed to stand still; then he broke out into a perfect shout of laughter, and springing forward, caught Harry by the coat-collar, and shook him, until, convulsed with merriment, they both sank helplessly upon the floor.

'You rascal!' said Charlie, as soon as he could get his breath; 'I owe you one for taking me in like that. I'll pay you off yet. My! isn't he a big fellow, though?' And he sat up on the floor to gaze at a lank skeleton which hung in the open doorway before him, shown off to the fullest advantage by means of a bright light which Harry had taken care to place behind 'the Baby' before he had exhibited it.

'It's a jolly good joke, any way,' he said, after a minute, during which Harry lay back on the floor, too weak from laughing to attempt to raise himself. 'Wouldn't it be grand to play him off on somebody who'd be scared half to death? I tell you my own heart went down into my boots for a minute.'

'Did it? I was half sorry I'd brought you in at night after we got here, for I thought perhaps you would have a real start; but you seemed so plucky, I thought I'd try you. But it would be mean to frighten anybody who was timid with it, Charlie. Didn't you look as if

you'd seen stars, though, that first minute?' And back went Harry's head again, and he laughed until he fairly rolled over and over in his intense enjoyment.

Charlie aided him most heartily, and the next moment another voice joined in the musical peal. Both boys started up from their recumbent position, and, facing about, met the laughing countenance of Will Perkins.

'I came out to see what the fun was,' he said. 'I saw that there was something in the wind. I never thought of "the Baby," though, until I saw you come in here; then I knew what Harry's game was. How do you like him, Brownie?'

'Oh, he's splendid! I tell you what I'd like, Will. To get somebody in here that would 'most go into fits at him. Wouldn't it be jolly?'

'Wouldn't it?' said Will, his face lighting up in a moment. 'We'll do it too. Let's see; who is there that we could get hold of? It would have to be some outsider, for all the fellows here know "the Baby," and it wouldn't take with them. Who could we bring in, Clifford?'

'Oh, don't let's try it on any one who will be really frightened,' said Harry. 'It's all well enough for us fellows who can stand it; but a scarey little chap might be hurt by such a thing. All's fair in war if you're fighting with men of your own size; but it's mean to hurt one of those half and half kind of fellows.'

Will laughed, and said, 'Well, that's all right, I suppose;' but when Charlie looked up at him, greatly disappointed by his ready acquiescence in what he thought Harry's very unreasonable remonstrance, Perkins gave him a wink and a nod, which somewhat surprised him.

'You'd better put that light out, Clifford,' said Will. 'Go in carefully, or you'll knock "the Baby" down.'

Creeping cautiously round the three iron uprights, from a hook in the converging point of which the tall skeleton was hung, Harry reached the lamp without disturbing 'the Baby,' and brought the light into the room.

'I'll arrange it,' whispered Perkins to Charlie, as Clifford passed into the closet. 'You keep quiet, and don't say anything to him.'

As Harry turned his face toward them again, Will sauntered to the window, making some remark about the brightness of the night, and went out of the room, leaving Charlie feeling like a traitor toward his bosom friend.

'Come on, now. Let's go back to the rest of the fellows,' said Clifford, blowing out the lamp. 'They'll be wondering what has become of us. If they'd known that I was going to introduce you to "the Baby," they'd have been after us, every mother's son of them, to see the fun. But I thought I'd have you all to myself. Wasn't it prime, though?' and he shook his head merrily. 'Can you find your way in the dark? Here, give me your hand, old man.'

'I'm all right,' said Charlie.

But all the while he felt all wrong, and couldn't bear to have Harry call him 'old man' in that affectionate friendly tone.

## VII.

### TEMPTED:

SOME weeks had passed since the night of the exhibition of Mr. Braisted's 'Baby;' but nothing further had transpired with regard to it. Charlie purposely avoided the subject. He did not want to displease Will by refusing compliance with his scheme, nor did he wish to grieve Harry by acting contrary to his wishes. Beside these two reasons for maintaining silence on the point, he had another. Harry's words had had their effect on him, and although he would have liked nothing better than the fun, as he considered it, of suddenly introducing some timorous little mortal into the appalling presence of 'the Baby,' he could not but feel that it would be a mean thing to do; and with all his faults, Charlie shrank from a small deed, if his eyes could only be opened to its littleness. The great trouble with him was, that his love of fun and excitement often blinded him to the meanness of such conduct, and led him on into cruel acts of mischief which he would not have committed if their evil consequences had been pointed out to him beforehand.

As for Harry, he had quite forgotten the suggestion which had been made in the 'lumber-room,' as it was termed, that night, and never alluded to it or thought of it again, until it was brought forcibly to his mind by later occurrences.

But Will Perkins had conceived a strong desire to

carry out the joke, and was quite determined to have his own way in the matter, notwithstanding Clifford's objections. He had not misunderstood Charlie's reticence on the subject; and knowing Harry's influence over him, he resolved to remain silent until a good opportunity to satisfy his love of mischief offered itself, and then to present it to Charlie, and urge him into a share in it, before Harry should have a chance to dissuade him. Week after week went by, and no unhappily nervous individual presented himself as a fitting subject for a fright. The only new-comer to the seminary was a young Irishwoman, newly arrived from the Green Isle, the very impersonation of innocence and good nature. Will had, at one time, thought of trying his powers upon her; but, after consideration, had concluded that her sturdy form and brawny arms were quite as likely to stand their ground, and prepare to do battle with 'the Baby,' as to fall before it. So he was still waiting for his victim, although poor Norah was, after all, doomed to suffer for his amusement.

'Boys,' said Mr. Braisted, as they sat at dinner in the long dining-hall one day, 'Du Chaillu is to give one of his gorilla lectures in the Town Hall this afternoon. How many would like to listen to him? Let me count the hands.'

The hand of every boy at the table was raised.

'You all want to hear him, eh? Be ready to leave home at five o'clock. The lecture begins at half-past five; rather an unusual hour, but he is only to be here for the afternoon. He takes the northern train at eight o'clock. You will go, Mary?' he added, turning to his wife.

'I should like to do so, but I have promised to let the servants go down this evening to see the menagerie, to

which you took the boys last night. You will need Mr. Travers with you, of course, and it will scarcely do to leave the house entirely empty, as it would be for about an hour if I should go.'

'Oh, the house will be safe enough,' said Mr. Braisted. 'The servants will not need to leave before seven, and we shall be back by eight, if not a little earlier.'

'And if ye plaze, ma'am, it's meself as'll bide at home the night,' said Norah, in a half whisper from behind Mrs. Braisted's chair. 'Wasn't me cousin here the morn to tell me he'd got lave to go the morrow, and to ask me wouldn't I go wid him? I towld him I would, knowin' 'twas me afternoon out, and ye'd take no offence wid it.'

'Very well,' said the lady. 'Then I will leave the house to your care.'

'I am glad I determined to try to train that girl,' said Mrs. Braisted, when Norah had left the room to obtain something that was needed at the table. 'It is a case where charity has brought its own reward. She is so quick and bright, and so willing to learn, that it is pleasant to teach her. Oh, by the way, she saw "the Baby," as the boys call it, this morning, and I wish that you could have seen her face!'

'Was she frightened?' asked Mr. Braisted, as his wife laughed over the recollection.

'No, hardly that, I think; I had prepared her for the apparition. I wanted to have the walls of that closet dusted down; so I took her into the lumber-room, and, after explaining to her what it was, opened the door myself, and remained in the room while she was in the closet. She made no objection to doing as I wished, but the way in which she crept about close to the wall, and guarded even her dress from touching "the Baby,"

throwing back at him, from time to time, looks of infinite disgust, was very amusing. When her work was finished she came out, and, standing back at a little distance, surveyed him from head to foot. "What do you think of him, Norah?" said I, for she was looking at him with a most uncomplimentary expression of countenance. She turned up her nose to an extent to which I never saw human nose turned up before, and, giving a little sniff, said, "Och, but he's the ugly baste," in a tone of such utter aversion that I laughed 'outright. She seemed amused too; but I noticed that she accepted my proposition to close the closet door, while she put the room in order with great alacrity.'

The boys were very much entertained by Mrs. Braisted's story, especially Will Perkins, who laughed immoderately; but as he was noted in the school for his keen appreciation of fun and humour, no one gave him another thought in connection with Norah; not even Harry, for he knew nothing of Will's half-purpose of making her the victim of his joke.

According to her own suggestion, Norah was left at home to pass about an hour's time alone. The afternoon had been dull and cloudy, and as the evening set in a drizzling rain began to fall. By the time the lecture was concluded the streets were quite wet, and the short distance between the Seminary and the Town Hall was passed over rapidly by the little procession, which was headed by Mr. Braisted and his wife.

'I don't see any light in the kitchen,' said Mrs. Braisted as they neared the house. 'It can't be possible that Norah has gone out.'

'Oh, no; we shall find her here,' said her husband. 'There she is, sitting on the steps! Why, what ails the



girl? Does she want to make herself ill? What are you doing out here in this rain, Norah?' he asked, as they reached the house, and found the girl seated on the door-step, wrapped in a cloak, but with the rain pattering down on her rosy face and waving hair. 'Why do you not stay in the house?'

'And I will, sir, now yez is come. But, indade, and I'd sooner be wet to the skin than bide in the house alone with that lad.'

'What lad?' asked Mr. Braisted, glancing back as he entered the door, as if to assure himself that all his young people were with him. 'The young gentlemen were all with me. What lad do you mean?'

'Sure an' it's the lad in the big closet beyant. The crater widout a ha'p'orth o' skin on his bones, nor even a morsel o' flesh to make hisself dacent, bad luck to him. Indade—'

A roar of laughter interrupted her. The boys had all entered the house, and were gathered in the wide hall, listening to her explanation; and now they fairly shook the floor, as, shouting with merriment, they stamped their feet, clapped their hands, and gave voice to their amusement in peal after peal of laughter.

Norah bore the ordeal very well, smiling upon the merry-makers with an untroubled face, until Mr. Braisted stilled the tumult; although, even after he had enjoined silence, a gurgling laugh broke out now and then, in spite of all efforts at gravity.

'Indade, gentlemen,' Norah went on, as soon as comparative quiet was restored, speaking in a general sort of way, as if she felt that an apology was due to the whole school; 'ye'd no call to be surprised that I don't like the look of him, for he's countenanced like an uncle

of mine that I left in the ould counthry, as evil a man as ever ye see. Batin' the big hook in the top of his head, he's as like him as two peas, barrin' the digression of his wantin' the nose—'

Another shout silenced her again, and Mr. Braisted, saying kindly that he was sorry she had been made uncomfortable by her fears, sent her down to her own domain, to which she retired, still smiling broadly upon her merry audience.

'Little Brownie! Little Brownie!'

Charlie had gone to bed about half-past eight o'clock, suffering quite severely from a sharp attack of toothache, but, thanks to Mrs. Braisted's good care and warm applications, had fallen fast asleep. He wakened now, at the sound of the whispered call, to find his pain all gone, and Will Perkins' face bent close to his own.

'Keep still, old fellow,' said Will, as Charlie turned with a muttered 'Don't,'—'I want you.'

Charlie opened his eyes wide, and looked at him, fully aroused now.

'Slip on your trousers, and come with me. We've got a jolly lark on hand. Don't wake Clifford.'

Charlie glanced over to the farther side of the room, where Harry lay fast asleep.

'Let's have him along,' he said, hurrying on his clothes.

'No, there's enough of us without him,' said Will, not thinking it wise to give his real reasons for his refusal.

'Come, are you ready?'

'Yes; what are we up to?'

'Going to see "the Baby,"' said Will, as they ran in their stocking feet through the hall. 'I told Norah to take a pitcher of hot water to my room at half-past nine o'clock; and when she comes up we're going to seize

her in the passage, and run her into the lumber-room to see her uncle's likeness by candle-light. Jack Harper, Herbert Demorest, and you and I. They said you were too little ; but I told them I couldn't do anything without my Brownie.'

'But isn't it long past that time?' asked Charlie, so delighted to be acting in concert with the oldest boys in the school, himself the only junior allowed to join them, that he lost sight of everything else. 'It seems like the middle of the night.'

'That's because you went to bed so early. It is just half-past nine now. Here we are. We're gloriously fixed, for Mr. and Mrs. Braisted are in the west parlour with company, and even if Norah screams they won't hear her with the doors all shut.'

'But do you think she'll be much frightened?' asked Charlie, a vision of Harry rising up before him, and taking the edge from his intense enjoyment of the frolic.

'No, of course not,' said Will carelessly. 'She'll enjoy it after the first minute. Hush! there she comes.'

They had been standing in the passage-way on which both Will's apartment and the lumber-room opened, in the shadow of an archway which led into the main hall. As Will spoke, Jack Harper stepped up beside them in the darkness. Norah passed them unsuspectingly ; but, as she set down her pitcher of water at Will's closed door, and knocked for admittance, they sprang upon her from behind.

'Och, young gentlemen, and what are yez at!' she said, with a little frightened cry, comprehending after the first instant that her assailants were only some of the

boys. 'It's time yez was all in your beds. Why did yez put the hall light out ?'

The only answer was a sudden shove and rush. She felt her feet passing over the sill of a door, which was instantly closed behind her, and the next moment a door before her opened slowly, and she saw a sight which made her cry out, and push back lustily against the three pairs of arms which held her so strongly. Even Charlie was, for the moment, greatly startled by the spectacle which met his eyes. A bright unearthly light shone out from the face of the skeleton, the first view of which had caused him so much amusement ; its arms were extended, and, as Norah was pushed, in spite of her struggles, nearer and nearer to its outstretched hands, it bent forward as if to touch her, and a deep solemn voice said, 'Oh, my beloved niece, come to my arms.'

Norah's struggles had ceased. She stood, stiff and rigid, staring up at the frightful object as it bent closer and closer ; but when one of those bony hands in its descent touched her shoulder, she gave a wild cry of utter terror and despair. Startled by the sudden shriek, Herbert Demorest, who, standing on a shelf behind 'the Baby,' had bent it down toward the terrified girl, lost his hold of the rod by which he steadied it, and the whole affair, skeleton, rods, and all, fell with a crash upon the shrinking figure, which, with another agonized cry, dropped senseless to the floor. The next instant the room was as solitary, except for poor Norah's unconscious form, as if it had never known any other tenant than that terrible Baby.

Will had been mistaken in supposing that Mr. and Mrs. Braisted were too far removed from the scene of action to hear any outcry which Norah might make.

Her shriek had rung through all parts of the house, bringing every one, masters, mistress, and boys, from their respective apartments, except Harry.

The room Clifford shared with Charlie was situated in a wing of the house at the farthest extremity from the lumber-room ; and the first he knew of the occurrence was, that Charlie dashed in from a door which opened on an unused back stairway, in his shirt and pants, carrying his jacket in his hand, and, dragging off his trousers in a twinkling, flung himself into his bed.

‘Hallo!’ said Clifford, sitting up to look at him. ‘What’s to pay?’

‘I’m in a jolly fix, Harry ; and Will and Herbert and Harper are in for it too. But shut up. I’m asleep, and you are too, if anybody comes in. We’ve been on a lark with Norah, and made an awful mess of it. Hush ! there are steps outside.’

Harry had heard nothing ; but after a moment, the tread which Charlie’s quick ear had caught drew nearer, the door was softly opened, and Mrs. Braisted’s voice said gently, ‘These little fellows have had nothing to do with it. They are both asleep, and Charlie went to bed with a dreadful toothache.’

Mr. Braisted, to whom she had spoken, stepped into the room ; and Charlie, not daring to pretend to be asleep, knowing how flushed and worried he must look, moved slightly on his pillow, and gave a weary sigh.

‘Poor child!’ said Mrs. Braisted, coming directly to the side of his bed ; ‘your face is aching still, isn’t it ? How heated you are, too ! You look really sick. Did you hear the disturbance in here?’

‘No, ma’am,’ said Charlie, devoutly thankful that she had put those two words—‘in here’—into her question ;

for he did not want to tell a lie, and he had not the courage to tell the truth.

As he spoke, Mr. Braisted joined them. He had been talking with Clifford, whom he, of course, found awake.

'Clifford heard no screams,' he said, 'though he had been awake for some time, he thinks; nor did he know of any such plan being afoot. Charlie, did you know anything about it?'

'About what, sir? Mrs. Braisted has not told me.'

He asked the question to gain a moment's time, for he had never seen such a severely threatening look on Mr. Braisted's face as it wore now.

'About a plan to frighten Norah with the skeleton. Of course, my poor boy, you had no hand in it, being in such pain; but did no one speak to you of it before to-night?'

'No, sir,' said Charlie, and clasped his face with another sigh which was almost a moan, for it was aching in earnest now, beating and throbbing with his excitement and terror.

'I'll warm some more hops, and lay them on, dear. Perhaps you will fall asleep again,' said Mrs. Braisted tenderly, as her husband left the room.

She spent nearly an hour with him, trying to calm the pain, which was certainly very severe, and when he was quiet at last went away, leaving a charge with Harry to call her if Charlie were worse again.

'Old man,' said Harry softly, as soon as the sound of Mrs. Braisted's steps had died away going down the hall; 'old man.'

'Well,' said Charlie mournfully.

'Take care, old man. You've begun to trip.'

'I'm not shamming,' returned Charlie sharply.

'No, I don't think it ; not with your face at least. I know that aches like a good fellow. But you only just escaped telling an out and out lie to-night ; and it will be worse to-morrow ; for, of course, we'll all be called up to tell what we know. "Him that overcometh,"—old boy ; don't forget.'

'But I can't go back on the fellows, Harry,' said a muffled voice out of the bedclothes. 'What can I do?'

'Stick by them if you can without lying ; but don't lie ; don't lie to save yourself, or the others either. If you give in now, Charlie, you may never have the heart to fight it out again. Tell the truth, and bear what it brings you like a soldier. Will you, old man?'

'Yes,' said Charlie earnestly, lifted above his fears by Clifford's eagerness. And when he said it he meant it ; but he was weak, and he had no higher strength to which to cling.

## VIII.

### OVERCOME.

WHEN the boys came together at the ringing of the bell for morning prayers, there was much discussion and inquiry with regard to the occurrences of the past night. As yet, the whole affair was wrapped in mystery. Mr. Braisted had had a talk with Norah, and had endeavoured to find out from her how she had happened to be in the lumber-room at that time, and what had taken place there previous to her fall ; but the girl could tell nothing.

All the events of the evening had been blotted out from her recollection by the terrible fright which she had received. She remembered having been left alone in the house, and having preferred to remain out in the rain to sitting solitary within doors. She had a vague idea of having compared her uncle to the object of her dread in a manner not very complimentary to either ; and no arguments could persuade her but that the apparition had appeared to punish her for her temerity. But all that had passed between the time of the home-coming of the family and the awful moment when she had lost all power both of body and of mind, was a blank to her ; she knew no more how or why she had gone to the lumber-room than did Mr. Braisted ; and she was so unwilling to speak of it, and grew so weak and trembling at any allusion to it, that there was no hope whatever of gaining any information from her.



Not a word was spoken at breakfast with respect to Norah. Another servant took her place at the table, for she was unable to leave her bed ; but, with that exception, everything went on as usual.

'Charlie,' said Will Perkins, as soon as they had passed out of the breakfast-room, 'will you come over to the brook with me ?'

Charlie started, and glanced around him as if for protection. Clifford stood just behind him, and his quick eye took in the situation in a moment.

'Look here, Charlie,' said he, stepping forward, 'you and I aren't ready for our history this morning. Let's go into the schoolroom and cram a little.'

This was no subterfuge, for Charlie had told his friend the evening before, on their way home from the lecture, that his lesson for the morning was not prepared, and Harry had confided to him that he was in the same dilemma.

'Come on,' said Clifford. 'We've only half an hour before school.' And, linking his arm in Charlie's, he tried to draw him away.

'Never mind the history. Come with me, Brownie,' whispered Will, holding him tightly by the other arm ; 'I've something to tell you. You can help me if you will, and I'm in great trouble. Come, little Brownie, don't go back on your best friend.'

Was he a better friend than this other, with the pleading voice, the clinging hand, and the earnest voice whispering, 'Don't, Charlie, don't ! Remember your promise' ?

The question flashed through his mind, but that other voice was saying in his ear, 'Come, Brownie. We'll let you do just as you like, only come and hear what we

have to say; you won't desert me when I really need you. We want your advice. You're in for it too, you know.'

The tempter had won his point. Charlie drew his hand from Harry's detaining grasp, and saying hurriedly, 'I'll take care, Clifford—he only wants my advice,' went away with Will, and Perkins felt that the battle was already won.

A half-hour's talk by the brook-side, a half-hour of persuasion, coaxing, pleading, and at last of fierce, angry threats, not only from Harper and Demorest, but from Will himself, and still Charlie wavered. He had struggled, and argued, and held back the promise of secrecy which they had tried first to win, then to force from him, and now their time was up; in another moment the school-bell would summon them back to the house.

'This comes of taking these little sneaks into your counsels, Will Perkins,' said Harper in a fury. 'You make a confidant of a mean little coward who don't know how to stand by you, and he betrays us all.'

Will turned his face toward Charlie with a look of withering contempt.

'You pretend to stand upon your truth,' said he, 'and now you hear what people think of you; and of me, for caring for you. You are a false-hearted young traitor. But let me tell you,' he went on fiercely, 'that if you betray us we will pay you for it in a way that you will remember to the end of your life. Come away, fellows, and leave him to hatch up his story. Perhaps Mr. Braisted will give him a dollar for turning State's evidence.'

'I won't!' cried Charlie hotly. 'I'm no mean coward!

I can bear anything that any one of you big fellows can, and you shall see if I can't. They shan't get anything out of me, not with the biggest thrashing they can give me.'

'Hurrah for the little chap!' cried Will. 'I knew he'd come out all right! Didn't I tell you he was true-blue? Of course his heart failed him in the beginning, but I knew he was good as gold. He'll never betray us! There! There goes the school-bell! Go ahead, you two fellows; Brownie and I will come on together.'

Drawing his arm through Charlie's, Will turned toward the house, talking eagerly. Charlie heard himself called brave and noble, true-hearted, a staunch friend, a chum to be proud of, faithful and firm; and he knew all the while, deep down in his shrinking, failing heart, that he was mean and weak and false.

All the other boys were in their seats when the four who had formed the party at the brook came into the schoolroom; but the fact that they were together excited no comment, for they had left the house separately, and no one knew that Will and Charlie had joined the others. Mr. Braisted sat in his place looking very grave; but as soon as all were seated he rose, and, looking from one to another of the faces before him, seemed to ask with his eyes the question which in another moment he spoke with his lips.

'Young gentlemen,' he said, 'you all know of the accident which has happened to Norah. I call it an accident, because I hope it may prove to be such, although I greatly fear that cruel hearts and hands have had to do with it. Of course, some one must have moved that skeleton from its proper position, otherwise it could not have fallen upon the poor girl as it did; but it is possible that

may have been done without any idea of injuring Norah. I am completely in the dark with regard to the whole transaction (Norah being entirely unable to recollect anything about it), and being so, I trust to your truth and honour. You all know that I am ready to make any reasonable allowance for youthful thoughtlessness and love of mischief; but you know as well that I never make any allowance for a falsehood. I ask you to remember this, and to tell me truly, each one of you, whether you have had anything to do with this unhappy occurrence. Walter Freeman, have you any knowledge of it?’

‘None whatever, sir, except what you yourself have given me since it took place,’ replied Walter Freeman, a steady, studious fellow, a member of the senior class.

‘John Harper, what do you know of it?’

‘Nothing, Mr. Braisted, except what I learned last night when Norah’s scream brought us all out of our rooms.’

So the question went around, the same answer substantially being given by each boy, until it came to Harry Clifford, who stood side by side with Charlie, who had not once looked toward him since he entered the room with Will, not even when Harry had whispered to him entreatingly,—

‘Remember, old man,—“Him that overcometh.”’

‘Clifford, had you anything whatever to do with this affair?’

‘No, sir,’ said Harry; but his colour came and went quickly as he spoke, for Charlie was the next in turn.

Mr. Braisted eyed him sharply for a moment, but Harry returned his gaze unflinchingly, and he passed on.

‘Charles Stockton, were you at all concerned in it?’

'No, sir, not in any way.'

There was no flush of colour in Charlie's cheek. He was pale to the lips, but his voice was calm and clear.

Still the question went on, until every boy had answered it with a denial. Mr. Braisted stood at his desk for a while, with his inquiring look moving again from face to face.

'Young gentlemen,' he said at length, 'I think it all but impossible but that some of you have been implicated in this thing. I shall say no more about it until this time to-morrow morning. If I have then heard nothing more, I shall ask each one of you whether you know who has been concerned in it. I dislike extremely to request any one of my scholars to bear witness against another, but I must know the truth; and if the participants in this trick have not the moral courage and manliness to own their fault, I must take other means to discover them. I cannot allow my authority to be defied in this way. I most earnestly trust, however, that no such action may be necessary. I cannot think that any one member of my little family will, when he has had time to reflect, descend to the meanness of screening himself behind a falsehood.'

There was a dead silence in the room; not a boy spoke or moved.

'We will proceed with our lessons as usual,' said Mr. Braisted; and the ordeal was over.

The work of the morning went on rather solemnly, and no one was sorry when the mid-day recess broke in on the dull hours. Certainly Charlie was not, for that remark of Mr. Braisted's, expressive of his intention of making his inquiries more general on the morrow, had

startled him terribly. The moment he was free he sought Will, whom he found with no trouble, for Perkins was coming to look for him. He dared not let his prey out of his sight now, lest Harry should persuade him, after all, to be honest and true.

‘How pale you are, Charlie!’ said Perkins in a tone of great vexation, hurrying him out of the house by a side door that opened on a narrow path which led away to the woods beyond. ‘You’ll be found out if you look frightened.’

‘But, Will, I am frightened, for we’ll have to confess, and it will be worse than ever now that we have denied it.’ And poor Charlie looked up into Perkins’ angry eyes with a very troubled face.

‘Confess! I’d like to catch you at it,’ said Will, giving him a sudden shake. ‘It would have been bad enough before; but if you betray us now, Charlie Stockton, I’ll—I’ll—’

He was trembling with passion, and paused as if to find a threat strong enough to terrify the boy into compliance with his wishes.

‘I don’t want to tell,’ said Charlie, shrinking back from him, ‘but we’ll have to, for Clifford knows; and when Mr. Braisted has us up to-morrow, he’ll have to tell, if we don’t.’

‘Why will he have to tell?’ said Will angrily.

‘Why, Mr. Braisted will ask him, and Clifford couldn’t tell a lie,’ said Charlie, with an assured trust in Harry’s truth which struck a chill to Will’s heart.

‘How does he come to know anything about it? Did you tell him?’

‘Yes, I told him last night. He was awake when I went into my room. He asked me what was the

matter, and I told him that we four fellows were in a scrape. I never thought of its doing any harm.'

'You little fool!' said Will fiercely. 'Didn't you know that he was safe to blab it all out if he was asked? What are we going to do?'

'Let's go right to Mr. Braisted and tell him. It will be an awful dose; but it won't be so bad as to hear it out before the school, and we won't feel so mean either. Let's go right off.'

'I won't do it, and you shan't either. I'll take care of Clifford. Where is he?'

'I don't know. But you'll never get him to lie about it, never!'

'We'll see about that. You go up toward the house, and try if you can find him. If you do, tell him I want to speak to him at the brook.'

'But, Will, if I do send him down, he won't promise you to hide it. I know he won't. Oh, Will, I'm miserable! I'd rather go right up to the study, and tell Mr. Braisted all about it. Let me go; I won't say a word against you or the other boys, not even if he expels me for refusing to let on; but I must tell him about myself, Will. You don't know how I've disgraced and dishonoured myself by telling that lie.'

'I know how you'll disgrace and dishonour me by confessing it,' replied Will, his face dark with rage. 'I'd rather you'd have told everything in the beginning, fifty times rather. Why, we'll all be expelled, every one of us!'

'I won't say one word about you, Will. I promised you before that I wouldn't; but you can't possibly know how awfully ashamed I am. I promised my grandfather

so faithfully never to be false again, and he believed me; and now I've deceived him, and told a lie.'

It must have been a cruelly hard heart that could answer with such words the look of shame and pain and grief which was lifted to Perkins' face as Charlie spoke. But Will's heart was hard.

'And because you are sorry that you have told one lie, you want to tell another,' he said scornfully. 'Because you have broken faith with your grandfather, you want to play the traitor to your friend, do you? Do you think that your grandfather will be better pleased with two falsehoods than with one? Oh, Brownie, Brownie! I never thought you could be false to me!'

His angry voice had changed to one of tender reproach; and he held out his hands, as if entreating the boy to return to his love. Tortured by his remorse, confused by Will's sophistry, easily led at any time, especially by words of love, Charlie stood looking at his companion with all his bewilderment and distress plainly written on his face.

'You will be true to me, Brownie, won't you?' pleaded Will, with his arm about his neck; and Charlie faltered—'Yes, yes, I will.'



## IX.

### A BRAVE STRUGGLE.

THEY were still standing together, and Perkins was reflecting on the fact of Harry Clifford's knowing who the guilty parties were, and on what he had better do in the case (for he was afraid now to let Charlie meet Clifford alone, lest Harry should again turn him from his allegiance to himself), when Charlie's name was suddenly called.

He looked up into Perkins' face, as if uncertain whether to answer the shout or not.

'All right,' said Will. 'We'll see what we can do with him. Tell him you're here.'

'Hallo, Clifford! we're in the copse,' shouted Charlie. 'Come on!'

The next moment Harry bounded through the narrow pathway which led into the secluded spot to which Will had taken Charlie; and for the first time since they had parted in the hall after breakfast, the two boys faced one another. One quick look, and then Charlie's glance fell; he could not meet the grave, troubled eyes which looked back into his.

'Well, Clifford,' said Perkins, almost before Harry was fairly within hearing of his lowered voice, speaking in a jaunty, friendly tone, 'so you are in our secret, I hear? Of course you will keep it.'

'Of course I will, if I can keep it honourably.'

'You could scarcely reveal it honourably,' replied Will,

with an uneasy laugh. 'But we can trust you through everything, I'm sure.'

He laid his hand in an affectionate manner on Harry's shoulder, but Clifford drew back.

'If by "trusting me through everything," you mean that you will trust me to sell my truth to shield you,' he said, 'you are mistaken. Just so far as I can help you by keeping still, I will, for no one hates tale-bearing worse than I do; but if Mr. Braisted asks me if I know who had a hand in the thing, I cannot and will not say no. If I can escape telling what I do know, nobody will be more glad than I shall be; but I will not tell a lie about it, not—not even to save Charlie,' he added gravely, after a moment's hesitation.

There was no mistaking his strong, fixed resolution to stand firm on this point, and Will despaired of moving him by any coaxings or persuasions. Springing towards him, with his face flushed by passion, he caught the little fellow by both shoulders, and, holding him fast in his strong hands, said angrily,

'You dare to stand there braving me with that girl's face of yours, and say that you will inform on us! I tell you, you shall promise to keep dark.'

'And I tell you,' replied Clifford calmly, 'that I will if I can; but I will not lie about it. If I did such a thing, I should not feel fit to kiss my mother.'

'You big baby!' said Will contemptuously; but somehow, even though he stood helpless in the grasp of those powerful hands, Charlie had never thought his friend so manly and so brave.

'You big baby!' repeated Will; 'you shall go home to comfort yourself with your mother's kisses if you don't look out for yourself, for you'll find you can't stand it

here ;' and he gave him a sharp, sudden shake. 'You was let into our secret by accident ; and if you don't pledge yourself to stand by us, I'll thrash you on the spot.'

'No, no,' cried Charlie, springing forward, 'you shan't hurt him ! I'll tell myself first. Let him up, Will ! Let him up !' for another rough shaking had cost Harry his equilibrium. He had staggered backward, and, borne down by Will's greater weight, had fallen to the ground, one arm and shoulder striking across the sharp edge of a large flat stone which had lain behind him.

'Stand off, and don't meddle,' said Will, enforcing his command with a thrust of his elbow as Charlie caught his arm to drag him away from Clifford. 'Now, Clifford, promise.'

'I have promised to stand by you as far as I can. More than that I will not do. Perkins, you will break my arm if you are not careful.'

Will's heavy right hand was pressing on the slight arm, just below where it crossed the sharp edge of the stone ; but it only pressed the harder in answer to the warning.

'I'll break it in earnest if you don't promise,' he said fiercely. 'Will you ?'

'No, I will not.'

'Oh, Will, don't, don't !' cried Charlie, in an agony, as he saw the colour fade out of Clifford's cheek and lips, and his forehead gather into a frown of intolerable pain. 'Let go ! Let go !'

He dragged Perkins' arm with all his force, but his strength was as nothing against that of the older boy. In an instant he had flung him off.

'Promise. Give me your word !'

'Nev—nev—never !' broke from the white lips ; and, to Will's horror, the slender arm bent with a little snap beneath his hand.

With a cry as sharp as that which burst from Clifford, he sprang to his feet, and stood for a moment looking down into the pallid face, which lay, with closed eyes and parted lips, upon the grass, white and still.

He had not calculated the power of his own strong hand, nor the fragility of the slight figure which held that brave spirit ; and he was, for the moment, paralyzed with terror by the sight of his own work. But the next instant selfish considerations rose even above his remorse.

'I must go down to the village. Tell Mr. Braisted I've had a telegram from home, and have gone down to answer it. Get some water from the brook, and throw it in his face ; and then run to the house for some one to help you. Tell Mr. Braisted he had a fall.'

Charlie had been standing, gazing with a horrified face at the prostrate figure, while Will spoke these hasty words ; but as Perkins turned away, he sprang towards him, crying out,

'Oh, Will ! don't leave me alone. I don't know what to do for him. Stay and help me !'

But Will hurried away, disregarding his plea. It was true that he had received a telegram. It had been handed to him as he left the house, but he had not intended answering it until after school-hours. Now, however, it gave him an excellent opportunity to escape questioning until he should have had time to prepare himself with satisfactory answers.

Finding himself left alone, Charlie hastened with a heavy heart to carry out the first part of Will's advice ;

and filling his hat with water at the brook which flowed close beside the copse, he knelt down at Clifford's side, and began to bathe his white face with very tender hands, telling himself all the while, with bitter self-reproach, that if he had been as true and faithful as Harry had proved himself, this would never have come to him.

'Clifford ! Clifford !' he cried out at last, as the dark lashes still lay motionless on the colourless cheek ; 'can't you open your eyes ? Can't you speak to me ?'

The next moment the heavy eyelids lifted themselves slowly, and, with a great sigh, Harry looked up into his friend's face.

'Oh !' he said wearily, and closed them again. But the great terror which had begun to creep into Charlie's heart was lifted from it now.

'Harry,' he said gently ; 'Harry.'

Clifford looked at him again.

'Where is Will ?' he asked feebly.

'Gone to Melville. He had a telegram from home. Is it very awful, Harry ?'

'It's pretty bad. How will I get back to the house ? It was mean of him to leave you alone, you poor fellow. I think he's broken my arm, it feels so queer ; but I don't believe he quite meant to. We won't say anything if we can help it. He's bad enough off already. You needn't say how I got the fall unless we're asked. I'm afraid you'll have to go up for Mr. Braisted, Charlie ; I feel so queer all over me when I try to move.'

'But I'm almost afraid to leave you, for fear you'll faint again,' said Charlie, looking wistfully at him. He wanted to say so much that he dared not say while Clifford was so weak, that his eyes spoke for him.

'Oh, no. I'll lie very still, and then I'll be all right. Hurry up, old man.'

'Oh, Cliff, don't!' cried poor Charlie, overcome by the use of the name he had learned to love so much. 'I'm not fit—'

Turning away with the words on his lips, he ran swiftly to the house, and in a twinkling stood in the schoolroom, breathless, eager, and half exhausted.

In their excitement, the three boys had not noted the flight of time; and the school had been in session nearly an hour when Charlie startled both teachers and taught by his abrupt entrance.

'Mr. Braisted, Clifford's sick. He's broken his arm. He's had a fall, and he's dreadfully hurt,' he gasped out, catching his breath between each disjointed sentence. 'He'll have to be carried home.'

Mr. Braisted hurried at once to Harry's assistance; and, finding the broken arm lying across the edge of a sharp stone, did not question the boy further when he had answered his first query.

'How did you happen to fall in such a position?' asked Mr. Braisted.

'I stumbled backward, sir,' replied Clifford.

'Was Charlie with you, or did he find you here?'

'I was with him, sir,' said Charlie, as Harry's eyes closed heavily again.

'It was most fortunate that you were,' said Mr. Braisted. 'He might have lain here all the afternoon. By the way, Perkins is not in school either. Do you know anything about him?'

'He had a telegram from home, sir, and ran down to Melville to answer it,' said Charlie.

'Without permission? It must have been very impor-

tant, or he would not have done so. Did it bring him bad news ?'

'I don't know, sir. He only said he must go down, and asked me to tell you.'

'He will explain it, I suppose. I am sorry he is absent in school-hours ; but if there is trouble at home, it may prove excusable.'

Mr. Braisted had lifted Clifford in his arms like a child, and, while they talked, had been carrying him carefully toward the house. As they reached the door, and met Mrs. Braisted there, her motherly heart brimming over, both at eyes and lips, with sympathy for the injured boy, the master turned toward Charlie to send him to the schoolroom. But the face which looked up into his, as he glanced behind him, was almost as pale and exhausted as that which rested on his shoulder ; and he saw, in a moment, that Charlie was utterly unfit for study.

'Why, my boy, this has been a little too much for you,' he said kindly. 'You had better go to your room and lie down.'

'Couldn't I stay with Clifford ?' pleaded Charlie. 'I'll be very still,' he added, following closely by Mr. Braisted's side as he mounted the stairs with his burden.

'Please take me to our own room,' said Harry, noticing that Mr. Braisted turned, at his wife's suggestion, toward the spare bedroom, a large apartment on the opposite side of the hall. 'I like it better. And let Charlie stay with me.'

'The doctor will be here in a few moments, and we will see what he says about your having company to-day,' replied Mrs. Braisted. 'Take him to his own room, Edward, if he prefers to go there. You may come

in, Charlie, until the doctor comes ; but you must not look so blue. You must cheer our boy up, now that he is laid by. Silly fellow ! Can't you even stand steady on your own feet ?' she added, bending to kiss the pale face which now lay on the pillow.

But the doctor did not object, as Mr. Braisted supposed he would do, to Charlie's presence in the room ; and when Harry promised that, if his friend were allowed to come back after his arm had been set, they would not talk for a while, and he would try to sleep, Dr. Maynard told him that Charlie might return.

So, when the doctor had gone, the boy was called. He crept quietly into the room, and, sitting down beside Harry's bed, took the well hand in his, and holding it, gazed at him with eyes which kept filling and re-filling with great tears that would not be held back. For Harry was so tender with him ; he had smiled so brightly at him as he came into the room again ; and he felt so guilty and so wretched.

By and by, as he sat there, with no sound in the room except the chirp of a bird that was hopping about on the window-ledge, picking up some crumbs which had been scattered upon the stone, he noticed that Harry's eyes were growing heavy ; little by little the lids fell softly down, and he dropped into a quiet sleep. Charlie watched him for a while ; then he left his seat, and stepped gently across the floor to his own bed.

"Him that overcometh—" he said softly. 'Oh, Grandpa ! if Harry was only your boy, instead of me, you wouldn't need to despair.'

The last words were spoken with a slight sob, and he hid his face in his pillow, lest he should waken Harry by his grief. But Clifford, worn out with pain, slept on for



the next hour ; and when he woke, he opened his eyes to see Charlie sitting quiet and calm again at his side. He lay looking at him for a minute ; then he said, as if to draw his thoughts from himself,

‘Charlie, what sort of a looking person is your Aunt Harriet ?’

‘Oh, she’s a little bit of a thing,’ said Charlie indifferently. ‘Snappy as anything she looks, and sharp. Always wears a black silk dress, and a plain bonnet, not a bit like what other ladies wear. She’s trim-looking, though. Oh, she’s nice-looking enough, I suppose. But don’t let’s talk about her. What’s the use ?’

Harry smiled, but said no more until Mrs. Braisted, who had been sitting in the next room, and had come in to see if he needed anything, finding him pretty comfortable, had left them again to attend to some household duties.

‘Well, old man,’ he said, when she had gone, ‘what were you doing with yourself all the time I was asleep ?’

‘I was writing to my grandfather,’ said Charlie very gravely.

‘Were you ?’ said Harry, his face lighting up with a smile. ‘What did you say to him ?’

‘There’s all I said,’ replied Charlie, taking a folded slip of paper from his pocket, and putting it in Harry’s hand. ‘I didn’t know how to write, nor what to say ; but I felt as if I must tell him, and tell him right off too. I don’t know what in the world he’ll do when he reads it, though.’ And Charlie’s face dropped down upon the pillow.

‘Did you mean to have me read this ?’ asked Harry.

‘Yes, if you choose. It’s only to tell him what a mean scamp I’ve been.’

The burst of repentant grief which had overcome Charlie after Harry had fallen asleep had been followed by a fit of depression, and he looked as wretched and unhappy as a naturally round, rosy face could well look, as he sat watching his friend while he read the little note which he had written hastily in pencil while Harry slept.

‘DEAR GRANDPA,—I’ve told another lie. I wasn’t surprised into it either, but told it right out and out, on purpose. And I’ve been mean and low too. I can’t tell you how, because it would be letting out on some other fellows ; but I’ve been awfully mean. I suppose it isn’t a bit of use to say I’m sorry, for you can’t believe it now. But, oh, Grandpa ! if you could only know how disappointed I am, you would be a little sorry for me. I’m going to begin again right off, by telling Mr. Braisted to-night what I have done ; but I’m afraid it isn’t any good to try. I can’t seem to help it. Please tell Hattie. I promised to let her know everything, but I can’t write any more about it. Don’t give me up, Grandpa, if you can help it, for I *will* try.

CHARLIE.’

Harry lay for a moment with the paper in his hand after he had read it ; then he said,

‘What do you mean, Charlie ? Do you mean that you are going to tell Mr. Braisted the whole truth ?’

‘Yes,’ said Charlie, ‘I didn’t tell Grandpa so, because I did not dare to promise him anything ; but you didn’t fight it out with Will for nothing this morning, Harry. I’m older, and larger, and stronger than you, and yet you held out while I gave in. But I tell you, you did something for me, Cliff. I’ll tell Mr. Braisted everything to-night, if Will kills me for it.’

'What if Will gets hold of you, and persuades, and threatens, and coaxes you, Charlie?'

'I'll keep saying to myself, "Fight it out, fight it out! Remember what your cowardly lie cost your best friend,"' replied Charlie excitedly. 'For you are my best friend, Cliff.'

'Thank you,' said Clifford. 'But I'm afraid you won't hold out.'

'Are you?,' said Charlie anxiously; for he was too thoroughly humbled to resent Harry's want of confidence in his firmness. 'I do honestly mean it, Cliff.'

'I know you do, old man; but so you did honestly mean it last night, and see how you slipped. Will can twist you round his little finger, Charlie; and you know it.'

'Then you think it isn't a bit of use for me to try to have it out with him, and tell him that I'm going to Mr. Braisted to-night? I can't go without telling him, for I've given him my word to stand by him, and I can't go right to work at another piece of meanness. I don't know what you want me to do, Cliff. Don't you think that I can stand my ground?'

'No, old man, I don't; not alone. But don't look so wretched, Charlie; there's some one who'll stand by you.'

'Not you,' said Charlie, as Clifford laid his hand on him affectionately.

'No, not I; but some one who knows how to help you enough better than I do. Did you never think to ask God to help you, Charlie?'

'No,' said Charlie candidly. 'He seems so far off, Harry,' he added, after a moment's hesitation.

'So He used to to me,' said Clifford; 'but He don't now. Do you want to know what I was thinking while

Will was hurting me so, and I felt myself getting weaker and weaker every moment? I kept saying to myself,—"Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Can't you take a good grip of that, and hold on to it? Just the same One said it, old man, as said, "Him that overcometh, I will write upon him my new name." He wants us to overcome, and He'll help us. I've tried Him, and I know.'

Charlie did not answer. Harry moved his face on the pillow, so as to bring it closer to his friend's, and looked at him steadily for a moment. Then he whispered a few low words; not to Charlie. But Charlie heard them, as Clifford meant that he should. As he listened, the contracted brow grew more smooth; the uncertain, timid mouth took upon it a firm, determined expression; and when the low voice ceased speaking, the troubled brown eyes were lifted with a quick, entreating glance toward the window. No words were spoken for a while; then Charlie asked, breaking the silence suddenly,

'Cliff, you're a Christian, I suppose?'

'Yes,' said Clifford, with a bright smile, 'I am; and I wish you were too.'

'I wish so,' said Charlie. 'I'm going away now.' And he rose from his seat as he spoke.

'To find Will?'

'Yes. I had better do it right off.'

'That's good, old man. Keep hold of my verse.' And Charlie left him.

Mrs. Braisted met him as he went down the stairs.

'How is Harry?' she asked, stopping him as he would have passed her.

'He seems to feel pretty jolly, ma'am,' replied Charlie. 'I think he must be doing first-rate.'

'You are not going down to the schoolroom, are you ? It is four o'clock.'

'No, ma'am ; I knew school was out, but I wanted to speak to Perkins.'

'I would stay out of doors for a while ; you look very pale. I am going to sit with Harry, and it will be better for you both that you should leave him for a short time. Run off and have a good play at ball. The boys are down on the ground now.'

Play was the last thing Charlie thought of as he went down the stairs. He paused a moment in the schoolroom, to place his little note in an envelope, and direct it to his grandfather ; then he went out, dropping it into the post-box as he passed ; but it was many a long day before he stood upon the ball-ground to take his share in the game.

## X.

### ‘HIM THAT OVERCOMETH.’

WILL PERKINS had entered the schoolroom very soon after Mr. Braisted had returned to it after carrying Harry to his room, and had at once approached the master's desk to make his apology.

‘I am very sorry, Mr. Braisted,’ said he, ‘that I am so late ; but as I went out of the house at recess, John handed me a telegram, which needed an immediate answer. You had gone up to the tower to put the telescope in position, and Mrs. Braisted was out ; so I ran off, hoping to be back in time, and leaving word with little Stockton that I should return directly. I was unavoidably detained at the office. All Melville seemed to be sending off messages just at that hour. I am very sorry that I am behind time.’

His candid but troubled manner might have deceived any one ; and Mr. Braisted, having no reason to suspect him, was easily satisfied. The boys were free to go and come as they pleased to and from the village in their leisure hours, for it was a quiet little country place, where there were no unusual temptations to evil, and Will's only fault had been his tardiness. This seemed to be explained, and Mr. Braisted readily excused him.

‘Your message brought no bad news, I suppose ?’ he asked with interest ; for Will's father was a close friend of his own, and he loved the boy for the parent's sake.

‘Oh no, sir. It was simply to tell me of an excellent

business opening which had been offered to my father for me. The house commences operations very soon, and father had to give an immediate answer ; so he told me to reply at once.'

'Then you have fully determined not to go through college, but to prepare for the life of a merchant ?'

'Yes, sir. You know I don't love study.' And the boy laughed in his careless way.

'Well, I am sorry ; but perhaps it will be your best path, if your tastes lie that way,' said Mr. Braisted, and dismissed him to his seat, never suspecting for a moment that the boy, spite of his easy, happy manner, was devoured with anxiety, and an uncertain dread that, notwithstanding his master's words of congratulation, he might know that which, were it discovered, would lose him all his bright hopes.

Will Perkins' father was a stern, unbending man, and his son feared more than he loved him. The noble points in his character which had, in their early years at college, won him the friendship of Mr. Braisted, were but little appreciated by the unprincipled boy who had inherited so few of his good qualities, and who had grown into the habit of carefully concealing from him all his misdemeanours. Will felt himself concerned far more deeply in his father's stern discipline and severe ideas of right and wrong, than in the justice, honour, and integrity of his life. For the latter he cared nothing, but of the former he stood in utter dread ; for, like every other boy or man who tyrannizes over those who are weaker than himself, he was at heart a coward. At any time he would have feared the discovery of the events of the past twenty-four hours ; but just now their revelation would have been a terrible blow to him.

For a year he had been very anxious to leave school and enter a mercantile house, and certainly no young clerk desiring to follow the life of a business man could have had a more attractive opportunity than that offered to him in the telegram from his father received that morning. The business, the house, the terms, all suited him exactly; and only such an anxiety as had clouded his enjoyment when it was put into his hands could have drawn his mind from it, even for a time. But now all these splendid anticipations were in great jeopardy; for Will knew well that if Mr. Perkins were made aware of the occurrences of the past night and morning, his hopes were all lost. His father would never recommend him to a post of trust and honour, knowing him to be false and dishonourable.

To his intense relief, he found that no one suspected his share in the accident which had befallen Harry Clifford; and also, to his great joy, he heard that he was doing as well as could possibly be expected. Now, if he could only see Charlie, and keep him from Harry's influence, he might escape detection; for he knew, in his own coward heart, that Clifford was too brave to betray him in revenge.

He was standing on the ball-ground, idly watching the game which he was too restless to join, and most earnestly wishing that Charlie would come down from Harry's room, when one of the boys, who had gone up to the house for another bat, said, passing him on his return to his post,

'Hallo, there, Perkins! Charlie Stockton is looking for you. He has gone over to the copse to see if you are there.'

'All right. I'll go after him,' said Will carelessly.



And in another moment he was following closely on Charlie's footsteps.

Charlie had gone to the copse, hoping to find Will in that spot, for he felt as if he could fight the hard battle which lay before him with a braver spirit there than elsewhere. Finding it deserted and lonely, he was turning from it disappointed, when Will, with a quick, eager step, came up the pathway toward him.

'There you are, eh, Brownie,' he said, as they approached each other. 'Tom Meredith told me you were looking for me here, so I came over. Nonsense, man,' he went on, in an irritated, impatient tone, 'how white you are! Is anything to pay? You'll ruin us all yet with that pale face, Charlie.'

'I should think there had been enough done to make us all look pale,' replied Charlie gravely. 'I only wonder, Will, that you can hold up your head.'

'Why, I'm as sorry as I can be for what happened this morning,' said Perkins; 'but they say that Clifford is doing nicely, and what's the use of blazing it all abroad when no good can come of it? Clifford has been right plucky, too, not to tell anything. You tell him, the next time you see him, that I think he's a regular brick. Nobody will suspect anything now if you will only try to look like yourself, Charlie. Why, what's the matter?'

Every vestige of colour had left the boy's face. Will had thought him pale before; but cheek and lips were ashen now, as, moving a step forward, he laid his hand on his companion's arm, and looking him straight in the face, with eyes which never flinched nor wavered, said,

'Will, I have made up my mind to tell Mr. Braisted that I was in that affair last night.'

His voice was low, but so firm and determined, that

Perkins hardly recognised it as that of the undecided, vacillating boy of the morning.

'You've done what?' he exclaimed, catching him by the shoulder, and holding him back so that he could gain the better view of his face.

'I have made up my mind to tell Mr. Braisted that I have deceived him.'

'Then you'll betray us all, for he'll know you never could have moved that heavy thing yourself; and you have given me your word to keep our secret.'

'I know I did, but I had no right to do it, and now I must take it back.'

'That miserable Clifford has got you under his thumb again,' exclaimed Will in a passion. 'I wish he was in Calcutta! What has he been saying to you since I left you?'

'To persuade me to be true! Nothing, until after I had told him what I have told you. He didn't need to say anything after what I saw this morning. I never felt myself such a scoundrel in my life as when Clifford lay on that stone beneath you, refusing to be cowed, as I had been. I must and will confess my own share in this thing, whatever comes of it. I have promised my grandfather I'd do it to-night. I have written to him.'

'Then it will be traced home to us all, and I shall lose everything by it. If you will keep still, all will go right; for Clifford won't tell unless he's asked, and, of course, Mr. Braisted won't bother him now. Brownie, just listen to me; and I'm sure you won't be the one to bring me into trouble. I am going home in a week. At least wait until I am gone.'

And then, with all the persuasive art of which he was master (and that was not little), he told him of his

plans and hopes, of his father's stern severity, and of the certain loss of his bright prospects in the event of the discovery of his misdeeds. But, for the first time, his words fell powerless on the ear of the boy who had, for weeks past, been so easily led by his arguments and his wishes. In vain he called him by his pet name; in vain he told him that he leaned on him, trusted him, clung to him; in vain, at last,—growing furious with rage, finding that although the face into which he looked seemed to grow whiter with every breath, the brown eyes never faltered in their fixed, resolute gaze,—he called him a traitor, a spy, a viper who had crept into his bosom and then stung him.

At length, breathless with his own vehemence, he paused; and Charlie said, quietly,

‘My telling Mr. Braisted my own part in it to-night won't really make any difference to you, Perkins. It must all come out to-morrow morning. When he asks us if we know who was in it, I shall have to say, “Yes.”’

‘And you mean to say,’ cried Will, carried beyond all self-control, ‘that you will tell him who was in it besides. Charles Stockton, you had better take care of yourself. I don't often get into a rage, but when I do—’

Fairly choked with passion, he hesitated for words to finish his sentence, but there was no need for them. No words could have spoken more plainly than the crimson face, with its flashing eyes, and the white teeth biting hard into the lower lip.

Charlie Stockton was not a brave boy. His early years had been too much controlled by mere brute force for him to have escaped altogether the craven spirit which such a training fosters in a child, and the fear of physical suffering had always been sufficient to lead him

in one way or the other; the dread of punishment had either kept him back from sin, or, if the fault were committed, as more frequently happened, had driven him to deception and falsehood. But now a new power had taken possession of him,—a strong, unalterable determination to carry out, through everything, his purpose of atoning, so far as he could, for the errors of the past. Not a feature nor a line of the firmly-set face moved or faltered beneath the angry gaze which was fixed upon it.

'Do you mean to say,' asked Will at last, in a low, concentrated tone, 'that you have fully made up your mind not to stand by us?'

'I have fully made up my mind not to tell another lie, cost what it may to whom it may.'

'Even including me?'

'Even including you.'

'Take that back, or you'll suffer for it.' And Perkins lifted his closed fist above the brave, resolute brow.

Charlie made no answer.

'Will you take it back?'

'No.'

The heavy fist fell full upon the upturned face. A crashing, blinding pain went throbbing through his head, and, with a low groan, Charlie bent his face into his hands. But the next instant the crimson tide, which had gathered beneath the force of that tremendous blow, burst its bounds, and his agony was relieved in a moment. He stood erect again, a pitiable object, but as determined and dauntless as before.

Will had not released his hold of him. He had waited, sure of his victory, until Charlie's head was lifted. The bruised, stained face woke no pity in him; it was too resolute yet.

'Will you take it back?'

'No.'

'Then I'll thrash you,' said Perkins, infuriated by his want of success. 'I'll thrash you till you do.'

'You can't do it,' said Charlie, all the boy force and power in him roused to resistance, 'for I'll never take it back.' And with a sudden jerk he tried to twist himself from Perkins' hold, but the other was too strong for him.

He caught him as he would have sprung away, and struck him, not once or twice, but twenty times, till the struggling little figure lay helpless across the arm which held him fast. Then he paused in his cruel work.

'Will you take it back now?'

'Nev—nev—never!' gasped the feeble voice, exactly as Clifford had uttered the words before.

Something in the recollection sickened the miserable tyrant; and, with a fierce exclamation, he flung the boy from him, and rushed away, never recking that the brown head, in its descent, had struck the stump of a fallen tree, that the brown eyes had closed, and that a red stream was flowing slowly down from a deep, jagged cut made beneath the clustering curls by the hard wood against which Charlie had fallen with terrible force.

The players on the ball-ground had all gone, and the sun shone across it, its long, slant beams unbroken, save when a bird dipped its bright wings to bathe them in its golden glory; and the evening stillness began to settle down over the lawn and the adjoining fields, for the merry company which had made the air ring with their happy voices were all busily engaged within doors in satisfying the strong appetites which their exercise had



“With a fierce exclamation, he flung the boy from him, and rushed away.”—*Page 102.*

narrow pathway. 'Gettin' up some bit of a trick to play off on their mates. Hey, Mr. Perkins, sir! Hallo, Master Stockton! Are yez there at all?'

'Ah, now! Just look at him, the crayther!' he said the next moment, catching sight of the form which lay upon the ground before him as he entered the copse. 'He's tired out, and fell asleep just. Wait a bit,' he added in a whisper, with a knowing smile. 'Belike it's a trick on me. Wait till I get a look at the face of him.'

The boy lay with his back towards him; and, with his countenance beaming with a broad, good-natured smile, Barney crept around him, making quite a circuit in order not to rouse him if he were really asleep.

'I'd like to get a look at him afore he wakens, sleepin' there so peaceable,' said he, in his habit of talking to himself when alone. 'Och, presarve us! What's this?'

For the face into which he looked, as he bent over the boy, was not quiet in sleep; but it might have been quiet in death for any sign of life it gave, as he lifted it to his broad knee, and laid it down gently there.

'Och, but they've been havin' a fight, and the little one's got the worst of it. The mean brute to touch him, and he a big sthrappin' chap, and him but a small, little feller! Wouldn't I like just to put me hand on him? Master Charlie, dear, Master Charlie!'

But no answer came from the closed lips; and, lifting the boy in his brawny arms, Barney prepared to carry him to the house. Not until he raised him did he see the gash in his head, and the ugly sight made him start back so suddenly as almost to drop the child upon the ground.

'Och, but he's just murdered him intirely, the sar-pint!' something of the truth flashing upon his mind. 'What was he at, bad luck to him? It's all wrong, I

warrant ye, for it's a bad eye he has on him. I never took to the looks of him since first I laid eyes on him ; and it's meself as was always a lamentin' over the friendliness betwixt 'em, for I knowed it could come to no good for the little one. Oh, Master Charlie, dear ! Why couldn't ye be aisy wid Mr. Clifford, just ? And what has he done to ye at all, at all ? Nothin' but just kilt ye intirely !'

All these hurried ejaculations had been poured into poor Charlie's deaf ear, as his heartbroken admirer moved toward the house, bearing him in his arms. He had bound his head tightly with a handkerchief which he had taken from his pocket, and had laid Charlie's own over his bruised face, lest Mrs. Braisted should be shocked by the sight of it.

'For the saints love ye, dear,' he said, as he covered it tenderly ; 'but it's a good thing ye haven't a mother to see ye the way ye are, for 'twould break the heart of her intirely, so it would.'

It was ten o'clock. Mr. Braisted had come down from the spare bedroom where Charlie lay, still unconscious of all around him, and, entering his private study, to his surprise found Jack Harper and Herbert Demorest waiting there.

'Mr. Braisted,' said Jack, coming instantly forward, as the master's eye rested inquiringly on himself and his companion, 'of course we know that we ought to be in our rooms ; but we have waited for you since nine o'clock, to confess what will probably result in our expulsion. We had meant to hide it, but this cowardly attack on little Stockton has made us change our purpose. Demorest, Perkins, and I planned and carried out the trick played on Norah last night, and we let



Charlie come in. This morning we made him promise not to tell what he knew. He was very unwilling, but we fairly badgered him into it. What has occurred since, we don't know ; but we strongly suspect that he has taken back his promise, and that the trouble between him and Perkins has grown out of that. We felt as if we must tell you what we had done before we went to bed. The little fellow fought hard against us before he yielded ; and we are disgraced enough without doing anything more.'

'Do with us what you may think best, Mr. Braisted,' said Herbert, as Jack ceased speaking, 'and we won't complain. But, however much you may scorn us for trying to lead a younger boy astray, don't think us contemptible enough to aid in any such miserable work as has been made with him since.'

'I do not know,' said Mr. Braisted sternly, 'that he has suffered more in body than he has in mind. This confession throws light on other things which have puzzled me to-day. I have yet to learn, Herbert, that it is any less contemptible to wound the soul of a child than to hurt his body. You may go to your rooms. I must have time to think before I can decide what is the best course for me to pursue.'

## XI.

### AUNT HARRIET.

‘HARRIET, my dear,’ said Dr. Mason, coming into the room where Miss Harriet sat at work, with an open letter in his hand, and his fine old face all aglow with some heartfelt pleasure, ‘I certainly think that our boy has taken himself up in a manner that should give us every reason to hope the very best things for him. Here is a letter from himself, fairly brimming over with love and earnestness, and fun too, withal ; and it encloses a note from Mr. Braisted, which assures me that he has not yet detected him in any serious fault, nor known him to attempt to deceive him when he has erred in matters of less moment. I do think, I do indeed, my dear, that we may conclude that this change will prove of immense service to him.’

He looked wistfully down into his daughter’s face as he spoke ; for this boyish letter, the simple record of his grandson’s efforts, failures, successes, and hopes, had been a great joy to him, and he wanted her sympathy and congratulations.

‘It is quite the most encouraging letter we have had,’ he went on, as his daughter glanced up at him with a smile which had a sad expression in it, as if it said, ‘Your faith is very beautiful, father ; but I am afraid you are still deceived.’

‘Take it, and read it for yourself, my dear.’

He laid the paper in her lap, and with that lingering,

longing look still fixed upon her, waited while she read. Watching her so closely, he saw her keen black eyes soften somewhat, and once or twice a half smile parted her lips.

'She is pleased,' thought the Doctor. 'How could she help it?—such a true, honest brave letter as it is. Well, Harriet?'

She had lifted her eyes from the paper, and the smile which met his questioning gaze was far more cheerful and less pitying than that with which she had listened to his eager words.

'It does sound very earnest,' she said, with a real effort to sympathize with him in his delight; 'and he seems very happy too.'

'Braisted tells me,' said her father, 'that this young Clifford, of whom he talks so much, is a most hearty little Christian, and the best possible friend for a boy of Charlie's disposition. Yes, yes,' and the old man leaned his head down on his hand, looking thoughtfully on the floor; 'yes, I do feel very much encouraged. Indeed, I have not felt so happy and so content for years.'

'Dear father,' and Harriet Mason's sharp eyes grew sweet and tender for the moment, as she leaned over him, 'I hope you may not be disappointed again.'

'I hope so, my dear,' he said, rising, and kissing her forehead. 'We will trust and wait. Now help the old man on with his coat. I must ride over to see Mr. Paisley again. He was very ill indeed this morning. There! What a fine valet my little woman makes!'

He turned when she had helped him to put on his light overcoat (she had to stand on an ottoman to reach his tall shoulders), and took her in his arms, and kissed her again before he went away. It was little wonder

that she watched him as he sprang into the carriage and drove away with glad, proud eyes, or that she whispered, as she went back to her embroidery,—

‘Dear, noble, beautiful old man!’

He was all that she called him. Even if he had had no physical beauty to attract the eye, the grand soul that was in him would have made him still a ‘beautiful old man.’

But when she sat busy with her pretty work once more, Miss Harriet’s thoughts went from her father to Charlie. Her heart had grown a little softer toward the boy during the past few weeks. His voluntary exile of himself from home, and from the grandfather whom, in spite of the anxiety he brought upon him, she knew that he dearly loved, had done much to disarm her opposition to him, and to convince her that he at least intended to make an honest effort in the right direction.

His continued absence had done something for him also. Delivered from the annoyance of his careless, teasing ways, she began to see that he had some pleasant traits after all. She missed his sweet, jovial whistle about the house, and the ring of his joyous laugh; even the stamp of his hurrying, noisy feet would have been endured with patience now. There were no merry stories of school pranks, related at the table with such enthusiasm and enjoyment that she laughed in spite of herself with infectious mirth; there was no one to run out, with a bound and a shout, to welcome her father home from his wearisome rounds, bringing a flush of joy to his tired, worried face. She was always there to meet him with a smile and a kiss; but the rollicking, rough, happy boy was not, and she saw that her father missed him sadly.

Charlie would have been amazed beyond all belief if he had known that, for two long hours, his aunt had been sitting, with her work lying idly on her lap, thinking of him, and that not unkindly. But so it was, and only Dr. Mason's return roused her from her reverie.

'Back again already, father!' she said in some surprise, going out, as usual, to meet him. 'Oh, you have stopped to leave our child,' she added, as the Doctor lifted Hattie Raymond from the carriage. 'Take care, Hattie; you'll bring in so much dust on your shoes if you step there. Walk on the gravel.'

Hattie did as she was told, but she came slowly up the pathway, and Dr. Mason followed as slowly. In a moment, Miss Harriet saw from the appearance of both that something was wrong.

'What is it, Hattie?' she asked, in alarm, for the child had reached her first.

'I don't quite know,' she said, looking up with her eyes full of tears. 'But Charlie—Charlie—' And then the sobs, which she had been trying, for the Doctor's sake, to keep back ever since he had met her at the post-office, and told her the ill tidings, broke forth, and she ran into the house to escape his notice.

'Father, dear, are you in trouble again so soon?' asked his daughter, as Dr. Mason mounted the steps of the piazza.

'Yes, my dear; but let us go in.'

They went back to the library, where, two hours ago, he had been so glad and happy, talking of his boy, and sat down there. For a moment he was silent; then he said gravely, but not mournfully:

'I have had another letter, or rather a little note, from Charlie, dated yesterday; and a telegram from Mr.

Braisted, dated of course to-day, telling me that Charlie is very ill. He has been hurt, my boy! and Braisted says he wants to see me. At least he cries out for me; but he knows no one.'

'How was he hurt, father?'

'I do not know, except that Braisted says that he was thrown down, and his head badly cut. I hardly know why I do so, but I connect this telegram with Charlie's note. You may read it, but I am afraid that you may not find the comfort that I gain from it. It was written yesterday, and the letter I gave you before I went out was written only the day before; poor little fellow!'

She took the note, scrawled in pencil at Harry's bedside, and read it, her father watching her just as he had watched her before, but not venturing to hope, as he had hoped before, for sympathy in his still unfailing faith. But that little, broken wail of repentance went straight to Aunt Harriet's heart, softened already by her long quiet thought of the absent boy.

'Oh, father, how sorry he is!' she said. 'Whatever he has done, he is bitterly repentant.' And there was a tremulous quiver in her voice, which told him how deeply the humble, contrite confession had touched her.

'You think so, my dear?' and the Doctor's face lighted with pleasure. 'I know that he is truly, earnestly sorry, but I feared that you might doubt it. I am glad, heartily glad, my dear, that you can believe what he says.'

'But what about this telegram, father? Shall you go right on to-night?'

'To-night, if possible; but I cannot tell how it may be. Mr. Paisley is still worse than he was this morning, and I am sorely afraid that I shall not dare to leave him. The train starts at six o'clock, and if I can do so con-

scientiously, I will go on then, and reach Melville by sunrise. If not, I must try to be content to leave Charlie to Dr. Maynard until I can be spared. He is in Melville now, and the boy could be in no abler hands. But I must go, if it is in any way practicable. Dear little fellow ! calling for me, and I not there.'

'But I must not waste time in vain regrets,' he went on, less sadly. 'I must trust him to Him who rescued him from greater peril than threatens him now. I am going almost directly back to Mr. Paisley, and shall not return. Just lay a few necessaries in my portmanteau, my dear, and I will take it with me ; so that, in case I can get off, I may spend the last possible minute with the poor man. In any event, I will send Watson back with the carriage, so that you may know how I have decided.'

In a few minutes he was gone again, and Miss Harriet went to find Hattie. For a long while she sought her visitor without success, but by and by she bethought herself of the barn ; and there she found her, lying on a mound of hay, with her face hidden in Caspar's shaggy coat, still crying as if her heart would break.

Caspar had not remained for many days in Hattie's keeping ; for the Doctor, and, to tell the truth, Miss Harriet as well, missed him so that they could not do without him. Hattie had brought him home, with Charlie's surprised consent, and he divided his canine affections and attentions between herself and the Doctor. When Dr. Mason was at home, or visiting in the neighbourhood, Caspar diligently attended his out-goings and in-comings ; but when he set off in his carriage, to be gone for hours, the dog trotted off too, and took his way to Lindon, to wait upon Hattie. As to Aunt Harriet, he

never noticed her in any way whatever. He had left home, as usual, that afternoon for a visit to the Hill when Dr. Mason went out, but had walked down to the post-office with Hattie, and had followed the carriage home again when the Doctor had taken her up.

'I wouldn't lie here, dear,' said Miss Harriet kindly. 'You are getting your clothes full of bits of straw, and you'll smell doggy lying upon Caspar in this way. Come in with me. Yes, bring him if you want him,' she added resignedly, as the girl looked longingly back at the huge dog, who had sprung to his feet as she rose from her position upon the hay.

'Oh, Aunt Harriet! how can the Doctor stay with Mr. Paisley when he wants so much to go to Charlie?' said Hattie, as they walked toward the house. 'I can't bear to have him stay home when Charlie needs him.'

'He does not need him, dear, so much as Mr. Paisley does. I suppose that Dr. Maynard is as good a physician as father, and Mr. Paisley would have no one who understands him. I am very sorry. I don't wonder that father feels as he does; but it is as great a grief to him as it can be to Charlie. Yes, you can come in, Caspar.'

Into the library! Hattie looked up in perfect amazement. Aunt Harriet coloured a little.

'I suppose you would like him to come in,' she said, with some hesitation. But she did not say—what she must have told if she had uttered the whole truth—that she wanted him herself, strange to tell.

The afternoon passed quietly enough. Miss Harriet sat by the window, waiting for the messenger from her father, with Hattie close beside her waiting too, one



hand lying on Caspar's head as he sat by her side. Not until five o'clock did the grey horses for which they were looking come trotting briskly down the road. Hattie sprang up, and rushed to meet them, Miss Harriet following her almost as swiftly.

'Has the Doctor gone, Watson?,' cried Hattie.

'No, Miss,' said the coachman, 'he has not. Mr. Paisley is very ill indeed, Miss; and he don't dare to leave him. He bade me carry this to Miss Mason.'

'May I read it, Aunt Harriet?' asked Hattie. Miss Harriet drew her towards her, and they read it together:—

'MY DEAR,—I cannot go. Paisley is at the point of death, and nothing but the most incessant watchfulness of every fluctuation can possibly carry him through. I must wait until to-morrow. God will care for my boy. I want to thank you, my dear, for believing him, even although he has slipped again.

Your loving FATHER.

'Keep Hattie with you to-night.'

'Will you want me any more, ma'am?' asked Watson, as the lady looked up from the paper which he had handed to her.

'Yes. I shall go to the train myself.'

'Oh, Aunt Harriet!' exclaimed Hattie; 'are you really going? Oh, I am so glad! Let me go with you,' she added, the thought suddenly flashing upon her. 'You ought not to be all alone at night, and I would be company for you.'

'Do you think your father and mother would allow it?' asked Miss Harriet, evidently greatly gratified.

'I think so. Let Watson drive me up, and I will ask them.' And in another moment Hattie was in the carriage, and the grey horses were rushing toward Lindon Hill, for there was no time to be lost.

Back she came again, jubilant, her father with her, to see that the two ladies were safely started on their sudden journey. They found Miss Harriet all ready; and to the end of her life Hattie Raymond never ceased to wonder how Miss Mason had contrived in so short a space of time to pack into that trunk which stood strapped in the hall the stores of delicacies and various comforts which it was found to contain when they arrived at Melville.

As Mr. Raymond assisted Miss Harriet into the carriage, a waggon drove up, and Farmer Harland sprang down from it, and came up to the door with a basket in his hand.

'I came over, Miss Mason,' he said, rather shyly, 'with a basket of late plums; regular beauties they are. I wanted to know if I could get them to the young gentleman any way. Maybe you're sending on by express now and then. You see, I always felt as if I'd got him turned off from home, and I feel kind of bad about it; for he was such a handsome, happy little chap, that I liked him right well, after all. If you'd give me his directions, I'd like to send him this basket, for a kind of a little make-up, you see.'

'I am going to see him, and will take it with me gladly,' said Miss Harriet, bending her head far more graciously than was her custom, as the farmer lifted his basket. 'My nephew is ill, and will, no doubt, enjoy your beautiful fruit exceedingly. I thank you for him heartily.'

Hattie looked up in surprise. She had never heard Aunt Harriet call Charlie her nephew before, and had almost doubted whether she recognised the relationship. But Miss Mason said no more ; and a few moments later they were comfortably seated in the train, speeding rapidly on toward Melville.

## XII.

### TRUSTED STILL.

THE quiet of the night was still resting almost unbroken on the house, when Harry Clifford rose from his bed on the second morning after his hurt, and, slipping on such of his clothes as he could arrange with only his good right arm to aid him, drew an afghan which lay on the foot-board over his shoulder, and sat down in the window to enjoy the sweet morning air. He had passed quite a comfortable but a very wakeful night, for a long sleep into which he had fallen early in the evening had broken the rest of the later hours, and his anxiety for Charlie had not served to quiet him.

As much of the truth as she could veil, Mrs. Braisted had kept from him; but she could not hide it all, for Harry had feared the worst when his friend failed to appear to give him the result of his interview with Will, and he would not rest satisfied until his questions were answered. This much Mrs. Braisted had told him,—that Charlie had stood true to his word, and that Will had thrown him down, and his head had been badly injured. She had not told him that this had only been discovered through the boy's ravings, which was the truth. Shortly after he had been laid in bed, he had opened his eyes and looked about him, as if in search of some one, and then had cried out, piteously,

‘O Will! I do love you, I do; but I can't tell another lie. I won't, I won't, not if you kill me!’

No one who watched him as he pled, or shrank back

as if from a blow, or sat up suddenly, with a resolute, determined face, saying steadily, as if in full possession of his senses, 'I'm not false to you, Will; but I must be true to Grandpa,'—or cried out and shrank back again,—could fail to know the end of the meeting in the copse. William Perkins could have had no more convincing witness against him than the delirious boy, who lay all night long unconsciously revealing the shameful truth.

Toward morning he had grown more calm, and, as the day wore on, talked incessantly of his grandfather. He recognised no one; but every face which bent over him, whether it was that of the doctor, or Mrs. Braisted, or Norah, who had been installed as nurse in the sick-room, was greeted by the same entreaty.

'Tell Grandpa I was true at last. Tell him not to despair. I will be worthy of him. "Him that overcometh"— Tell Cliff. Tell Grandpa.'

And every time that Mr. Braisted entered the room he told him his share in the trick played upon Norah, confessing his deceit with such sorrow that the master was at length obliged to avoid his room altogether, in order to spare him the excitement which the story produced each time he related it.

So it went on all day long. The little letter, so humble and so penitent, pursued its quiet way; the telegram sprang with a leap over the many miles which lay between him and his grandfather, and still he lay there talking to him, sending him messages, and saying to the anxious faces which leaned over him, trying to ease his pain,—

'My name is Mason, Charles Mason—"a name which has never needed to own to a lie until now."'

The one thought was in his mind incessantly. Even William Perkins had no place there now.

But of all this Harry knew very little. He was aware that the doctor had been sent for at once ; but he did not imagine that he had spent the whole of the two last nights in the house, besides having called in to see Charlie three or four times through the day. Twice he had been in to see him, to arrange the bandages of his arm, and make him as comfortable as possible ; but when he had asked him about Charlie, he had spoken very cheerfully and encouragingly of him, and Harry, always inclining to look on the bright side of things, was happily easily satisfied. His arm had done marvellously well, too ; and he found himself so much less ill than he had feared he might be when he first understood the extent of his injury, that he was ready to believe that Charlie might escape as well.

Fortunately for his speedy recovery, Clifford, in spite of his slight figure, was a tough little fellow, strong and even sinewy for his age ; and his cool, equable temperament, and easy manner of taking everything which befell him, aided him wonderfully now. No fever of any consequence had followed upon his accident, and he was in all respects as well and as strong as was possible to a boy who carried an arm bound in bandages and splints.

‘Why, Harry!’ said Mrs. Braisted, coming into his room to see if he were sleeping, and finding him, to her surprise, established at the window ; ‘it is only half-past five. Why did you rise so early ?—and you were awake so much last night, too.’

‘That is just the reason I got up, ma’am,’ said Harry ; ‘I was so tired of the bed. How is Charlie?’

‘He is in less pain, I think. He has been talking about you, and wants me to tell you that he “stood true,” as he expresses it.’

'May I go in to see him to-day, Mrs. Braisted?'

'If the doctor says so; but he wants him kept very still, and I don't believe that he will let any one see him yet. Are you going to remain up altogether, Harry? If you are, you had better let me help you on with your jacket, and tie your cravat for you.'

She aided him to put on his jacket, which she had already opened on the shoulder, and, after doing all she could to make him comfortable, left him to return to Charlie. Clifford had re-seated himself at the window, and was opening his Bible to read, as he usually did before breakfast, when the sound of carriage wheels on the road below made him lift his head. A carriage approaching the house at six o'clock in the morning was something very uncommon. Could the doctor have been sent for so early? If he had known it, Dr. Maynard was lying asleep in a small room adjoining the apartment where Charlie lay, having thrown himself down for a little rest after a long night of watching. Not knowing this, however, he peered into the vehicle as it drove up the avenue, with very anxious eyes. There was no Dr. Maynard there, but a lady and a young girl,—a little lady, in a black silk dress and a plain bonnet!

"'Snappy as anything, she looks, and sharp,'" thought Harry; for he had recognised her in an instant from Charlie's description.

'Aunt Harriet,' he said to himself. 'Oh! what a pity that she should have come just when Charlie's sick! She'll bother him to death. Who's that girl, I wonder? Oh, I suppose it's that Hattie Raymond he talks about. I'm glad she's come. I'd like to see what sort she is.'

After breakfast, when Dr. Maynard came in to see Harry, preparatory to leaving the house for a few hours,

he thought it more wise, finding him so bright, to tell him something of Charlie's real condition, fearing that he might by some means hear the truth in an abrupt manner, which might do him harm. Clifford learned, to his grief, that it had been thought necessary to send for Dr. Mason ; and that, as he was detained by the illness of his patient, his daughter had come in his place. But somehow, even when he knew all the truth, Clifford was not down-hearted. He could not bring himself to think anything else than that Charlie would come out of this fierce trial refined and purified, but stronger than ever ; and although the knowledge of his sufferings made him grave and quiet, he steadily insisted, to all who expressed any fears for his friend, that he was 'sure' that he would recover.

'He'll get well, I *know* he will,' he said over and over again. 'And he'll live yet to show us all what a true, noble heart can do, even though it may be carried under in the first of its struggles.'

For the second time in the five years and more since her nephew had been under her care, Aunt Harriet stood looking down upon him with a soft tenderness in her usually sharp eyes. The first time that unwonted gaze rested on him he had been asleep, but even in slumber it had disturbed and roused him ; now he glanced up to meet it, hastily, and with a frown. He did not seem to know her, but rather to connect her with herself ; for although he addressed her at once, he spoke of her as if to a third person.

'Oh,' he exclaimed fretfully, 'tell Aunt Harriet I did hang up my hat. Caspar's all right. I can't go after him now, I'm so tired and hot, and the sun burns so. He won't do any harm. She drives me so, it's no use



for me to try to please her. She's never satisfied. But Grandpa, dear Grandpa, I'm going to tell Mr. Braisted. I will be honest—I will !'

It was the same thing all day long, whenever she came near him, until poor Aunt Harriet could have wished, in her distress, that she might have been stricken dumb rather than that his tortured brain should have been so filled with recollections of her petty fault-finding and small restraints. Even once or twice, when she stood behind him at the bed's head, and laid her soft, cool hand gently on his flushed and bruised forehead, he moaned out that he would not spill the ice around if she would only let him have it ; for he was ' so hot, so very, very hot.' And when they brought him ice, and, in putting it into his mouth, he let a little water drop upon the bosom of his shirt, he put his hand over the spot hurriedly, and whispered to Mrs. Braisted,

'Don't tell Aunt Harriet. She'll say I'm so careless and provoking.'

It was hard to travel all those weary miles to be met thus ; to come to him with her woman's heart yearning over him at last, and to find that the hard hand of a strange Irishwoman was more welcome to him than her own ; to see him shrink and fret and moan, whenever he saw or felt her near him. But whose fault was it, that even in his delirium he turned from her to comparative strangers ? If we could but know how often these sharp, repellent, perhaps thoughtless words of reproof cost us who utter them not only the love but the respect of a child's heart,—a heart which we might draw the closer with gentle teaching and tender remonstrance ! Our Master does not bid us drive our children to Him ; He bids us 'suffer them to come.'

It was growing toward dusk. Miss Harriet, loth to leave the room, yet not daring to venture near the bed, lest her presence should excite the troubled brain again, sat in the farthest corner, wrapped in most unhappy thought; Mrs. Braisted had fallen into a light sleep in her arm-chair, thoroughly worn out; Charlie lay, for the moment, silent and motionless, and there was not a sound in the room except the ticking of the clock upon the mantel.

'Grandpa, Grandpa!' called Charlie softly, as he had called time and again all through the day—as he might have done if his grandfather had been asleep, and he were trying to rouse without startling him.

But now his plea was answered; for, as the boy spoke, Dr. Maynard gently opened the door and entered the room, followed by Dr. Mason.

'Well, Charlie,' said Dr. Maynard, laying his hand on his brow, 'does your head pain you any less?'

'It's hot, too hot,' said Charlie. 'Tell Grandpa how it was. Tell him—'

But another hand was laid upon his forehead, and the wandering, uncertain eyes fixed themselves with a curious, searching look on the old face with its crown of silver hair which leaned towards them. Little by little they lost their questioning, doubtful expression; a faint smile parted the fevered lips; and as the white head was bent still lower, Charlie lifted his arm, and put it lovingly around his grandfather's neck.

'Grandpa, dear, I did keep my word. Don't despair of me, Grandpa.'

'Never, my boy; my noble, brave boy, never! I trust you and love you more than I can tell.'

He smiled again, and taking fast hold of Dr. Mason's

hand, lay very still for a long while. By and by the wide-open eyes, which had been travelling to and fro about the room, vague and uncertain still, except when from time to time they came back and rested intelligently on his grandfather's face, began to close slowly, only to open fitfully again at first; but after a while the heavy lids sank, and the boy lay for hours in a restful sleep.

The news which Watson had carried to Dr. Mason of the departure of his daughter for Melville, on the previous evening, had sent him back to his patient's bedside with a far lighter heart. He had been more than half inclined to propose to her that she might go in his place; but her prejudice against Charlie had been so strong and so deep-rooted, that he had doubted her willingness to do so; and hoping to be able to leave home in the morning, he had concluded not to make the suggestion. That she had gone to the boy of her own free will was a double satisfaction to him, and through all the wearisome hours of the night the thought had been a comfort and support to him.

Life and death fought hard in Mr. Paisley's sick-room that evening; but steady, watchful care and unusual skill turned the almost equal balance, and at midnight, the feeble flame which Dr. Mason had tended and fanned so ceaselessly kindled into stronger light, grew steadier hour by hour, and by the early morning burned so clearly that he dared to leave it to the care of other hands, less skilful but no less devoted than his own.

The whole story of Charlie's sin, repentance, and suffering had been revealed before he reached Melville. Herbert Demorest and Jack Harper had in the morning, of their own accord, risen in their seats before the school,

and related all they knew of the occurrence. Harry, when questioned at their suggestion, had given his testimony, both as to Perkins' attack upon himself, and as to Charlie's intention of taking back the promise of secrecy which the latter had forced from him ; and last, but not least, Barney, after indefatigable exertions, undertaken entirely on his own account, without orders from Mr. Braisted, had tracked William Perkins to a little house in the woods, where he had hidden himself until he should be able to find out the extent of the injuries he had inflicted upon Charlie.

For, coming back to the scene of their encounter only a few moments before Barney entered the copse to call them both to supper, he had seen the prostrate figure still lying where he had thrown it, and had not dared to approach it. Standing there watching, hoping that it might lift itself from the ground, fearing he knew not what, he had heard Barney's step, and had hidden behind the trees, listening there to the man's horrified exclamations, true suspicions, and expressions of terror ; near enough all the while to see that the drooping head and nerveless hands were never once raised in answer to his appeal. All through the night he lurked about the house, trying to discover whether Charlie were alive or dead, but springing back into concealment every time he saw a human face. And that was very often ; for, until late in the evening, there were many of the older boys out in search of him.

Mr. Braisted had at length concluded that, afraid to return to school, he had gone home, and was just in the act of despatching a telegram to Mr. Perkins, to ask if Will were with him, when Barney came in, triumphantly leading his unresisting captive.

Perkins had not made the least effort to escape his arrest. Worn out with fatigue, hunger, and fear, he had yielded at once ; and although Barney had taken infinite delight in griping his arm fiercely and tightly, and telling him over and over again that if he attempted to run away from him he would tie him hand and foot, and carry him in his arms to the seminary, it was nothing but a pleasant little farce on his part, indulged in for his own satisfaction and revenge. For the exhausted boy knew well that he was no match for the strong Irishman in his present state ; nor had he the heart to attempt an escape, even were it feasible.

He made no effort whatever at concealment or deception, for there was no use in any such thing now. Indeed, Mr. Braisted asked him but few questions. He simply told him what he knew, and what he suspected ; asked him if he denied anything with which he charged him ; and when Perkins dejectedly shook his head, expelled him from the school.

Early in the afternoon, after a long talk with the master, in which the latter had used every persuasion in his power to induce him to endeavour to lead, from that time forward, a different life, William Perkins left Melville Seminary, never to return again.

Harper and Demorest were not expelled. Their distress and self-condemnation were so deep and so real when the result of their sin was disclosed, that no one could doubt its sincerity ; and Mr. Braisted felt that they had been already punished with a severity which they could never forget.

### XIII.

#### A PLEASURE TRIP.

THE experience of the next few weeks led Charlie Stockton to the firm and unalterable conviction that a fit of illness was about the happiest circumstance that could possibly befall a boy. After the first fortnight he suffered but little, and this new experience of babyfying and petting was perfectly delightful. Not only every boy in the school, but every article of property belonging to every boy, was at his service and command ; and he was the best man whose time and talents were of most use to the invalid. Harry, too, came in for his full share of attention and nursing ; for they were both looked upon by all the boys, especially those of their own class, as heroic martyrs who had shed their blood, and all but lost their lives, in the cause of righteousness and truth.

And, indeed, so far as his grandson was concerned, Dr. Mason found that this boyish enthusiasm and ardour were not so greatly exaggerated ; for the wound beneath those short brown curls needed to have gone but a trifle deeper to have ended for ever all Charlie's temptations, failures, and victories.

But even this, enjoyable as it was, was followed by still greater pleasure. Neither Dr. Maynard nor his grandfather thought it best for Charlie to return to his studies immediately on his recovery ; and Dr. Mason proposed that a little party, consisting of Aunt Harriet, Hattie Raymond, Harry, Charlie, and himself, should

take a trip to the mountains, and spend a fortnight or three weeks of the bright October weather among the grand rocks and beautiful waterfalls of the Catskills.

The proposition was hailed with delight by every one interested in it. Mrs. Clifford gave a ready consent to her son's accompanying the party; and on the first day of October, Charlie and Harry, the former looking very much paler and thinner than was his wont, but very bright and happy, and the latter quite his old self again, left Melville under Dr. Mason's care for Lindon, to remain there for a week, and then to start on their journey, it being considered more wise to try the effect of a short jaunt upon Charlie before the longer expedition was undertaken. The journey home proved a benefit rather than an injury, however; and at the end of the week the party set out, as happy a set of travellers as ever turned their faces from home for a pleasure trip.

Dr. Mason had been able to spend but little time at Melville, his duties at Lindon preventing him from making anything but flying visits to his grandson; but Aunt Harriet and Hattie had grown to be old acquaintances with Harry now. In fact, the Doctor, little as he had seen of him, seemed like an old friend too; for his genial manner had won Harry's heart at once, and he felt quite like a member of the little family at Lindon.

It was a beautiful morning, and as Charlie sat in the train with Hattie beside him, and Harry opposite, while Dr. Mason and Aunt Harriet occupied the seat behind the two which had been turned face to face to accommodate the young people, who had pleaded strenuously against being shut up in 'those stupid compartments where you can't see the fun,' as Harry expressed it, he thought he had never been so happy in his life. The

sun shone down gloriously on the rippling little creek which ran for miles beside them, and on the burning red and orange and burnished gold of the groves and woods beyond ; and the cool breeze came in softly through the open window against which he leaned, fanning the cheek which was growing in roundness and colour every day, and seeming to brace with new strength the limbs which, hour by hour, gained in vigour and in health. But he was very quiet, and sat resting against the window, leaving the conversation entirely to Hattie and Clifford, until the latter said suddenly,

‘Hallo, old man ! what are you thinking about ?’

‘Thinking how jolly it is to be alive ; isn’t it ?’ said Charlie, straightening himself up with a laugh, and coming out of his thoughtful mood in a moment. ‘Hattie, what have you got in that basket that’s good ? I didn’t want my breakfast this morning, and I’m hungry now, I believe.’

‘Yes, I was afraid you would be,’ said Aunt Harriet, leaning forward. ‘You and Harry must both need some nourishment, I think. There are some sandwiches there, Hattie ; give the boys some. But hand them each a napkin first ; you will find some on the right of the basket. Don’t spill crumbs, boys, and don’t grease your clothes with the butter.’

Charlie gave his friend a mischievous glance, but the old impatient toss of the head, and the vexed retort, which had been the usual answer in times past to Aunt Harriet’s fussy directions, were seldom seen or heard now : for, in the first place, although Miss Mason could never be anything less than uselessly particular and exact, her suggestions and remonstrances were given far more kindly than of yore ; and, in the second place,



Charlie had learned that there was a very tender side to his aunt's character, and that, irritable and impatient as she often showed herself to be in trifling matters, in things of greater moment she could display exhaustless patience and untiring kindness. She had not tended him with self-forgetful, gentle, sleepless care during the first two weeks of suffering and nervous restlessness for naught. Peculiar, trying, and vexatious as some of her characteristics were, Charlie had found that these were but the upper crust, and that beneath them lay a true heart—hard to win, perhaps, but 'faithful unto death' when won.

The boys, who had been too much excited in the prospect of their journey to be able to make a breakfast, were deep in the enjoyment of sandwiches, with the napkins dutifully spread over their knees, when a tall, gaunt-looking individual, with a basket on his arm, entered the car, calling out gruffly,

'Ba-naa-nas ! Ba-naa-nas !'

'Hallo ! that bean-pole has bananas there,' said Charlie. 'You'd like some, wouldn't you, Hattie ?' knowing that she had a weakness on the subject. 'How much are they ?' for the man was at his side with his basket.

'Twelve cents.'

'Twelve cents apiece ?' repeated Charlie, glancing up at the tall figure. 'That's high enough.'

'Can't help that,' said the man roughly, thinking that he did not wish to buy. 'Everything is high.'

'So I see,' said Charlie, mischievously putting back his head and looking up, as if he had to exert all his powers of sight to get a view of the distant face. 'How much would you sell yourself for, now ? How much a yard, for instance ?'

With an angry look and a muttered threat the man passed on, for his sharp manner had already been noticed by the passengers, and a hearty laugh had greeted Charlie's sally.

'Charlie! Charlie! I'll have to call you to order,' said the Doctor; 'this won't do.' But the boy caught a smile on his face as he turned to answer him.

'He's such an old gruffy, Grandpa, I, had to pitch into him. But I wanted the bananas,' he added ruefully, as the man passed steadily on, taking no notice of his beckoning hand, and his loud, 'Hey, bananas! bananas!'

So the day went merrily by, fun and enjoyment won out of everything, from the solemn fruit-vendor on until they reached New York, where they were to spend the night. In the morning they took the boat for Catskill, and Charlie found it no less 'jolly to be alive' than he had done on the previous day. Never were engineers, firemen, or captain more persistently beset by two investigating, inquiring, eager boys, than were those of the steamer which plied her way over the smooth waters of the Hudson that morning. But fortunately, engineers, firemen, and captain had once been boys themselves; and whether they recalled their own old thirst for knowledge on the subject of screws, paddles, and what not, or were simply won by the two bright young faces which went peering into every nook and cranny, or stood watching with excited interest the complicated machinery of the engine-room, they were ready to answer their questions, and satisfy their desire to see all that was possible and to learn whatever could be taught. Charlie's journey with Mr. Braisted had made him better acquainted with the mechanism of the machinery of a river-

steamer than Harry ; for the latter had never travelled on any vessel larger than a ferry-boat, and his pride in explaining what he understood was only to be equalled by Harry's admiration of his knowledge.

But at last Catskill was reached ; the stage-coach carried them safely over the hills to the very heart of the mountains, and they were set down, late in the afternoon, when the rosy sunset was just fading into twilight, at the little farmhouse where they were to make their home for the next three weeks.

'So there you be !' exclaimed a wiry-voiced, hard-featured, but kindly-looking woman, coming out of the house to welcome them. 'I got your letter yesterday, Doctor, and I'm all ready for you. No more parties for me, eh, Mr. Brown ?' with an inquiring glance at the coachman. 'Just as well. Come in, come in, sir, and I'll see to your supper, for you must be hungry. Never mind your traps ; I'll send Stephen to bring 'em in. Here, Stephen !' she cried with a shrill, piercing call. 'Where be you ?'

'Here, Martha,' replied a meek little man, appearing from the doorway of the house.

'Carry up them traps, and be-lively,' said the woman. 'Now, Doctor, if you'll bring your party in, we'll see to make you comfortable.'

They all went into a neat little parlour, where their hostess left them.

'Oh, father, what a disagreeable woman this Mrs. Husted is !' said Miss Harriet as soon as she was gone. 'I hardly think we can remain here.'

'When you come into the backwoods, my dear,' said Dr. Mason, laughing, 'you must expect to meet backwoods manners. The woman is kind-hearted, generous,

and a first-rate housekeeper and cook. Small as her house is, it is decidedly the best kept of any in the mountains. Besides, she will not annoy you, my dear. She will serve us at the table, but otherwise you will not probably meet her unless you have occasion to send for her.'

Miss Harriet, mentally resolving that such occasions should be very infrequent, went to her room to prepare herself for supper, while the boys and Hattie went out, after they had washed off the dust of travel, to ramble about the garden until the tea-bell should ring. They were soon called in by the welcome sound, and sat down to a hearty meal, which was as neatly spread and as deliciously cooked as if it had been prepared by hands far more learned in table arts than those of Mrs. Husted.

That lady sat at the head of the table, with the tea-tray before her, while her husband, the meek little man aforesaid, was seated opposite, with half-a-dozen tempting-looking dishes ranged around him. This was not Dr. Mason's first visit to the farmhouse; and Mr. Husted, having carved the dish of meat which stood before him, and served his guests, was engaged in conversation with him, when his wife's sharp voice broke in upon their talk in anything but a musical key.

'Would you be so good as to sarve the sarce, Mr. Husted, or must I do that as well as pour the tea? Perhaps you think it's only to be looked at; but when I put victuals on the table, I like 'em ate.'

'I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon, ladies,' said the little man hastily. 'I quite forgot myself in the Doctor's pleasant chat. What can I do for you, Miss Mason? Shall I give you baked apples and cream, or some of the sarce?'

'Thank you,' said Miss Harriet; 'I will take an apple.'

Her quiet, precise manner was in most marked contrast to the hasty embarrassment of her host, and it annihilated the little man even more effectually than his wife's sharp words had done. In deep dejection he silently attended to the wants of the rest of the party, simply saying to each in an awed tone as he extended his hands, one bearing a plate of apples and cream, and the other a plate of preserved plums, 'Apples or sarce?'

As soon as his duties as host were accomplished, the Doctor took him under his wing again; but poor Mr. Husted was too much abashed to be easily lifted into confidence sufficient to carry on the conversation.

The three young people had hard work to maintain their gravity; and no sooner were they safely established in the parlour again, than Charlie and Harry broke into a peal of laughter, which was merrily echoed by the Doctor and Hattie, while even Miss Harriet's face dimpled with a smile.

'Oh, Aunt Harriet,' said Charlie, as soon as he could speak, 'I thought I should just roar when you took that baked apple, for I knew you hated them. Why didn't you say, "Thank you, I'll take some sarce"? And Charlie bent forward, slapping his knees, and making the room ring again with his merriment.

'I did not wish to use that word,' said Miss Harriet, catching the contagion of his enjoyment, and fairly laughing now; 'and as I could not see what the dish contained I took an apple, lest Mrs. Husted should ask me again, as she did when I refused the lettuce, if country victuals didn't suit.'

'Yes, I heard her,' said Charlie, with another burst;

'and didn't you look snappy? Oh, I don't mean to be saucy, Aunt Harriet; I'm sorry.'

Miss Mason's face had flushed suddenly; but the flush died out, and she smiled as she said,

'We must try to bear with the woman; for, as father says, she seems good-hearted, and very anxious to please us.'

'Harry,' said Charlie, as they lay in bed together that evening, 'you never saw anybody so different as Aunt Harriet in your life.'

'Yes, I have,' replied Harry very positively.

'Have you? Who?'

'You.'

Charlie coloured a little under cover of the darkness.

'Oh, well,' he said, half apologetically; 'she don't peck at me half so much as she used to; and when she does fuss, she isn't so cross.'

'And you've learned to stand a little fault-finding, and even some fretting, without answering back or scowling, as Hattie says you used to do. Did you ever say anything to each other about it, Charlie?'

'Well, yes,' said Charlie, the colour rising higher still. He felt it, and was so glad that Harry could not see it. 'She was sitting by my bed one day trying to amuse me, and I was as cross as a Turk. My head was pretty bad that day. It didn't hurt so much as it sometimes did, but it felt prickly and grindy, and—well, just awful; and I kept growing crosser and crosser every minute, and Aunt Harriet was as patient and good as anything, until at last I felt as if she was kind of throwing all the blame on me, by being so good, you know, when I was so ugly; and it made me mad, and I said, "I wish you'd go away and let me alone." You ought to have seen

her face, Cliff, how red it got ; and her black eyes jumped, I tell you. She never spoke a word for a minute, and then she said in a queer voice, as if she was kind of holding herself in somehow, "I'll call Harry. Perhaps his pleasant talk will make you feel brighter." Oh, didn't I feel like a mean old snap-dragon, though ? I just took hold of her, and told her I was sorry, and that I had been sorry for ever so many days ; and that she hadn't been putting up so with all my whims and nonsense and ugliness, since I had been sick, for nothing. And so,' said Charlie, with an effort to hide the quiver which he felt creeping into his voice, 'we had a little making-up time there. She said some jolly kind of things to me, and I tried to pay her back in the same coin, and we've agreed to be the best of friends after this.'

And so they were. Not but that there was much yet to bear on both sides, for no two characters could well have been more diametrically opposed in all minor points ; but each was ready now to see the good in the other, and to judge with that charity that 'thinketh no evil.'

Those glorious, gay October days ! How swiftly they passed away, and how happily ! Day by day the ruddy glow came back to Charlie's cheek, and the old strength to his limbs, until he could tramp with the strongest over the beautiful mountain roads, or up the beds of the roaring, tumbling brooks, which wound their turbulent, noisy, frolicsome way down the mountain-side to the valleys below.

Timid little Mr. Husted was a noted mountaineer ; he knew every beautiful or curious spot in the neighbourhood, and was always ready to take his visitors in

any direction and to any distance; and as he was a cautious and reliable man, Dr. Mason allowed the young people to go where they would in his company, while Miss Harriet and he contented themselves with less adventurous expeditions.

And sharp, crisp Mrs. Husted proved herself the best of hostesses, even though she did murder the King's English so pitilessly. Never so busy but that she could lay aside her present employment to attend to something which was wanted by her guests; as kindly in her actions as she was hasty in her words; her kitchen always open even to those two peering, inquisitive boys, who wanted to know the how, and the why, and the natural result of everything that she was doing, and everything new that they saw—she was a veritable wonder of scolding good-nature.



## XIV.

### BUTTERMILK FALLS.

'WELL, young folks,' said Mr. Husted, as they sat at breakfast one bright, sunny morning, 'what are we going to do to-day?'

'Let's go off somewhere,' said Harry, 'on a tremendous tramp. We've only three days left before we go home, and we want to make the most of them.'

'You must not let these tireless boys wear you out, Mr. Husted,' said Dr. Mason; 'there will be no end to their exactions if you give yourself up to them.'

'Oh! it won't hurt him,' broke in the hostess in her sharp voice; 'he's no good to home, and he might just as well be off with the youngsters. Not that there's any harm in him, ma'am,' she added, as Miss Mason looked at her, evidently much surprised by her extreme freedom of speech, considering that the subject of her remarks sat directly before her; 'but Stephen Husted never was up to much as to business. For the mountains, now, he can't be beat; but as to business and accounts, and settling things generally, why, dear me, Stephen Husted's nowhere. Stephen, dish them berries. Blackberries, stewed down to a jam, Miss Mason. You'll find them very tasty after your steak.'

'What is the best place that we haven't seen, Mr. Husted?' asked Charlie, speaking quickly, in order to prevent the voluble lady from beginning another speech.

'Well, there's Buttermilk Falls,' said the little man very humbly.

'Buttermilk Falls!' exclaimed his wife. 'Well, Stephen Husted, is it possible that you mean to drag these children to that place? Why, nobody goes there.'

'That's just as they please,' said her husband. 'Only, as to the dragging, if they run, and jump, and spring as they generally do, I don't see as I'll have much call to drag 'em. These youngsters beat all for climbing, Doctor, that ever I did see. Why, even Miss Hattie here never wants more than a helping hand. I haven't had to lift her more than once or twice in all the tramps we have been on. They're good for Buttermilk, Martha. They'll do it, and come down as fresh as daisies.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Husted, with a sigh of resignation, 'I never set myself against Stephen on the mountains. It's just the one p'int on which he knows more than I do; but I'm safe to say that they'll all come back with skinned hands and blistered feet. You'll cost me half a dozen fresh eggs, too, for it'll take the lining skins of all of 'em, if not more, to mend your broken toes; you see if it don't.'

But it was decided to start on the expedition in spite of Mrs. Husted's remonstrances; and shortly after breakfast, with their dinner neatly packed in a large basket, which their leader slung on a stick over his shoulder, the little party set off in high glee, jubilant over the fact that the excursion which they had planned was one which was so seldom undertaken.

They had quite a distance to traverse before they reached the path which led up the face of the Falls; for Mr. Husted's house was situated more than a mile north

of the mountain down which the tumbling cataract rushed, fall after fall, in ten or twelve separate cascades.

Leaving the road at length, they struck directly up the face of the mountain, and soon found that there was hard work before them; for huge rocks, which must be clambered over, unless they chose to spring through the dashing, laughing water, which gurgled round them on every side, rose above them in all directions. But the boys could climb like monkeys, and Mr. Husted, being as tough and wiry as he was small, swung Hattie easily over every obstacle which she could not master; and these were not many, for the light little feet tripped and sprang from point to point as if they were winged.

'Hallo! look at this monster!' cried Charlie, who was somewhat in advance of the rest of the party. 'I don't know how you're going over this, Hattie.'

Hattie looked in some dismay at 'the monster.' A rock five feet high lay in their path, a square mass, the only means of surmounting it the barkless trunk of a tree covered with a light moss, which, being soaked with the spray of the dancing water, only added to the difficulty of crossing it in safety.

'What will we do?' asked Charlie.

'Shin it,' cried Harry; and, suiting the action to the word, he sprang upon the log, and, raising himself by that peculiar mode of locomotion which is dignified by that name, was soon standing triumphantly, waving his hat, and shouting 'Excelsior,' on the summit of the rock.

'But Hattie, I meant Hattie,' said Charlie doubtfully.

'Oh, I'll take care of Hattie,' said Mr. Husted. 'Go up to the top yourself, and hold your staff down so that she can cling to it, for I'm afraid to trust Harry's lame

arm, and I'll manage the rest. Now, Miss Hattie,' when Charlie had reached Harry's side, 'we'll walk up together. As soon as you can reach the staff, take hold of it.'

Lifting her upon the fallen log, and keeping his hands firmly on either side of her slender waist, he guided her safely up the sharp and slippery slope, instructing Charlie to draw the staff slowly backward as they advanced, and in a very few moments Hattie stood beside the two boys.

'Now turn around, and look about you,' said Mr. Husted, as soon as they were all gathered on the top of the rock.

Even those noisy, thoughtless boys stood silent, gazing at the beautiful picture. Rock piled on rock in magnificent confusion, covered with moss of the clearest, brightest green, rose before them; and over all the limpid water dashed merrily down, leaping from point to point as if wild with joy in its freedom and beauty, the diamond-like spray burning and gleaming in the sunlight.

'Oh!' said Hattie at last, with a long, deep breath of perfect enjoyment.

'Pretty nice, ain't it?' said Mr. Husted, in a tone of admiration as strong and heartfelt as if his pleasure had been expressed in sentences of rounded eloquence. 'Wait one minute till I show you the echo.'

He took a pistol from his pocket, and fired it into the air. Report on report followed each other in quick succession; and even when the sound had lost its first sharpness, it went booming on from rock to rock, and from hill to hill, until it lost itself among the distant peaks. 'I always did think that this was the nicest place in all the Catskills,' he said, when it was quiet again;

'but there's just one look-out here that's better yet, and if we're to see it we must be on our way.'

On again, over the rocks and the stones, turning aside from the bed of the brook oftentimes into the woods on one side or the other, where the water ran so deep as to prevent their passage; over huge fallen trunks which had lain for ages in those deserted woods,—lain so long that the hard wood had slowly, year by year, turned soft and yielding, so that when a foot or hand of some one of the party did but touch the beautiful cushion of moss which covered it, it sank and crumbled beneath the weight.

A little after mid-day they sat down to rest, and to unpack the tempting-looking basket which Mrs. Husted had prepared for them—prepared most lavishly, too, her objections to the proposed expedition not having expressed themselves in her provisions for its needs.

A large flat rock, which lay at the foot of a high fall, but quite out of the reach of the leaping water, which looked, as it sprang merrily down the height, as if it were trying to dash them with its sparkling spray, made an excellent table. Hattie and Charlie unpacked the basket, while Harry went to the basin of deep water which was found at the foot of the fall to fill the tin cups, and Mr. Husted rolled up four large stones for chairs. Comfortably seated around their table, they discussed cold chicken, eggs, biscuits, pies, etc., with the strongest interest and attention, and then lay back upon the sunny rock to rest for half an hour, preparatory to another hard scramble.

'See my hands,' said Harry, holding up two palms, from each of which he had in some way taken off the skin near the wrist. 'I didn't know I had done that.'

'Oh, you bark easy this crisp weather,' said Mr. Husted. 'You'll have a chance to use some of Martha's egg-skins.' And he gave a long, low chuckle, his limbs meanwhile shaking with a peculiar motion, which always seemed to seize upon them when he was amused.

'Mrs. Husted wasn't really vexed by our deciding to take this tramp, was she?' asked Hattie.

'No, child. Martha feels she must have her say, that's all. She's the best-hearted creeter you ever did see; it's only her tongue that's so sharp. Why, she wouldn't go to hurt a fly, Martha wouldn't; and yet, to hear her talk, you'd think she was the ugliest-tempered woman in the country; but why, she's just the finest. She ain't got her match in this township, nor, I don't believe, in the whole United States, Martha ain't. All the while I was a courtin' her she was a'most snappin' my head off from day to day. But I held on, for I could see it wasn't only but skin deep; and it's been so ever since. She's spicy outside, and no mistake; but you get inside of her, and she's all right there. Now, if we're to see the highest fall, we must be off.'

So away they went again, refreshed and invigorated, winding up the long, steep, rough slopes; or, where the water was more shallow, going up the bed of the brook, as they had done before, coming out from time to time face to face with another beautiful cataract.

'Here's the beauty of them all,' said Mr. Husted, as they stood looking up at one of these cascades, which the rays of the sun struck at such an angle that a magnificent rainbow hung above its sparkling waters. 'Not that it's really so high a fall as some of the others, but the sweep you get from the top of it is surprising. Come up, and

we'll sit there awhile, for it's a hard place to get away from.'

Passing up at the side of the fall, they found themselves upon a table-rock, and, pushing their way through the thick growth which had sprung up from the crevices, came out upon the verge.

No wonder the simple countryman had called it 'a hard place to get away from.'

Looking directly down before them, they saw, stretching far away, the path over which they had come; the grey rocks, with the foaming water dashing over them, or plashing musically against their sides; the huge stones, covered with brightest moss or white and grey lichens, with long drooping ferns waving their graceful leaves in the clear sunlight. All around them were the grand old mountains, rising serenely in their magnificent beauty on every side, wrapped in their flowing robes of crimson, green, and gold, standing out majestically against the brilliant blue of the autumn sky, while at their feet knelt the soft, smooth valleys.

Awed into silence, the little group stood gazing out upon the beautiful scene, breathless with delight.

'That's a neat little mountain, that little green fellow over there,' said Mr. Husted, touching Hattie's shoulder, and pointing towards the west, where a wooded hill lifted its green head, still untouched by a single autumn hue.

The words grated on Hattie's sensitive ear, but they were spoken in a low, soft voice; and turning to look at the speaker, she saw that his uncultivated face bore a refined, elevated expression, which she had never seen in it before.

'Yes,' she said gently, 'it is beautiful. It is all

beautiful. It is so grand, and yet it is so lovely and so sweet !'

'I don't know how it is,' he said, in the same low voice ; 'I always feel like a child, somehow, when I get up here. It makes one feel so very little, so very much as if there was nothin' to 'em. It always makes me think of Moses standing on Mount Nebo ; for it seems as if, if God spoke out, kind and gentle, from the sky, "Come, Stephen," to me, I could lay me down here just as easy, and die so peaceable.'

Hattie's heart smote her for her impatient thought of his first words, there was something so touching in this plain, ignorant man's deep appreciation of the matchless scene. Many a time, through all her after life, when she was tempted to think lightly of those less refined and less fully educated than herself, there would come to her the recollection of Stephen Husted's rapt face, and the echo of the tone of that simple, 'Come, Stephen.'

But they could not stand for ever entranced by that glorious view, and Mr. Husted was the first to waken from the spell and suggest their departure ; for the afternoon was speeding on, and they must descend the mountain before nightfall. So they turned away, slowly and reluctantly, toward home.

'Wait a minute,' said Mr. Husted ; 'I don't feel quite sure of the path, for it's more than a year since I've been up here. There is a high tree on the top of a knoll out yonder, and I'll just climb it and see if I'm all right. We're so shut in here I can't see my bearings.'

They had been walking down the mountain-side for some minutes, and were now in a thick piece of woods.



Leaving the two boys and Hattie together, with injunctions not to move from where they stood, their guide walked rapidly away, only pausing to lay his pistol down at the root of a tree, saying, 'Don't touch that, boys ; it's loaded with ball now. I'll leave it here lest it shouldn't approve altogether of climbing trees.'

He was scarcely more than fairly out of sight, when a low, growling sound came through the woods behind the little group.

'What's that ?' said Hattie, turning quickly.

She was not a particularly timid girl, but the woods were very lonely, and the sound was anything but reassuring.

'What is it, Charlie ?'

'I don't know, Hattie.'

But he had a strong suspicion, nevertheless ; a suspicion so strong as to make him move a step nearer to the pistol which lay at the foot of the tall pine-tree.

'Oh, Charlie, look !'

She grasped his arm tightly, pointing forward with the other hand ; but the boys had both seen the shaggy brown bear, whose sudden appearance among the trees had wrung that cry from the startled girl.

In a moment Charlie had pushed her behind the tree, seized the pistol, and planted himself before her, Harry taking his place at his side.

'Mr. Husted ! oh, Mr. Husted !' screamed Hattie in terror.

But Mr. Husted was up among the topmost boughs of a high tree many rods away from her, and the cry did not reach him.

'Hush, Hattie. We'll take care of you,' said Charlie, in a low, constrained voice.

He was taking aim at the great, stupid-looking creature, which stood eying them with a heavy, sleepy look. Both boys were very pale, but rather from excitement than from fear; for they had already been told that the bears, which sometimes came down from the mountains as the winter weather drew on, were very timid and easily frightened.

'Shoot, and then give it to me, quick!'

said Harry, breathlessly. He was longing to have a hand in this mortal conflict.

The animal had lifted its head at Hattie's cry, and now it moved a step forward. It only intended to turn and trot away, poor frightened thing! but in an instant the pistol snapped; there was a flash, a sharp report, a hot, stinging pain in its head; a second's pause, then another flash and report, another, and another; and as Mr. Husted, with a shout, and a face white with consternation and terrible expectation of he knew not what, dashed in upon the scene, he saw old Bruin totter and fall, while Hattie stood white and trembling against the tree; and the two boys flung their hats into the air, and screamed and cheered till the woods rang again.

'Dear, dear!'

said Mr. Husted, as they stood around the vanquished foe, 'I thought you'd killed yourselves, for sure; and whatever would I say to the Doctor? Dear me, dear me! And to think you should have killed the first bear this season! But you needn't look so pale about it, Miss Hattie. They never attack nobody, poor creeters! They only come down to look for something to eat; they never hurt nobody unless they're angered o' purpose.'

Nevertheless, Hattie was very glad to turn her back

on the fallen enemy, although she could not help but join in the great pride and delight of the successful young marksmen.

Striking through a by-way which only a mountaineer could have traced through its winding labyrinths, Mr. Husted led them down the mountain by an entirely different road from that by which they had ascended it, bringing them out at dusk at a little farmhouse, where they had their supper, for which they proved themselves, one and all, heartily ready ; and, obtaining a horse and waggon from the farmer, drove his tired pleasure-seekers home through the moonlit country roads.

Wearied enough they all were when they reached the cottage, where Dr. Mason and his daughter, both beginning to feel rather anxious, were waiting to welcome them ; but no words could tell how much they had enjoyed themselves, what glorious sights they had seen, and what glorious things they had done.

All night long they dreamed of bears, and tremendous encounters with wild beasts of every kind, and woke in the morning to find themselves, to their infinite delight, the heroes of the whole neighbourhood.

Dr. Mason sent up to the scene of their exploit to have the spoil brought down from the woods. The triumph of the spoilers, as they were carried, sitting astride their victim, which they had met at the foot of the mountain as it was brought down, up the road and into the little settlement, was quite beyond description ; and never did any two people sit down to a meal with more voracious appetites than those with which the boys attacked bear-steaks on the following day.

But they came to an end at last, those three weeks of almost perfect enjoyment, and the party turned their faces homeward once more,—the Doctor to his patients, Miss Harriet to her housekeeping, Hattie and the boys to their interrupted studies—each and all the stronger and the better, both in body and heart, for those happy days among the mountains.

## XV.

### FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

CHARLIE'S labours at school did not prove very arduous during the following winter. It had been his wish to return to Melville, and Dr. Mason had thought it best for him to do so. But continued study was too fatiguing an effort for him as yet ; and although he was otherwise in his usual health and strength, Mr. Braisted was obliged to watch him carefully, and to shorten his hours of mental occupation very considerably.

But morally, if not intellectually, Charlie seemed to move steadily forward from the time of his return to the seminary. Little by little he was making a name for himself, and establishing a standing in the school. He could hardly have been more favourably situated for such an undertaking ; for the very fact of his fall, his resistance to further wrong-doing, and his consequent suffering, had placed him before all his companions in the position of one who had made a bold stand for the right, and was determined to set his face like a flint against wrong. His temptations to evil were far less severe than in time past ; every one looked to him to uphold the standard which he had set up ; and, knowing that it was so, his hands were strengthened to keep it floating on the breeze.

The early winter passed rapidly away, and the time drew near for the examination which took place each year before the chief magnates of the township, previous

to the breaking up of the school for the Christmas holidays. Charlie was not sufficiently prepared to take his proper share in the examination ; but he kept his place in his class, and was present at the recitations, although no questions were put to him.

On the second morning of the examination, it so happened that he sat next to Robert Clements, a studious, plodding young fellow, always deep in some abstraction, and as far removed from surrounding objects, if a book were open before him, as if he had been miles away.

It was Charlie's delight, in his mischievous love of fun, to rouse Clements suddenly, by some means, from these thoughtful reveries, and startle him into doing something utterly out of place and keeping. Clements had long borne his teasing patiently and good-naturedly, for he was an easy-going, pleasant fellow, and generally laughed as heartily as any one over the mistakes and blunders into which Charlie was constantly leading him.

On this particular morning the school was to be addressed, prior to the review of the junior class in the course of history through which they had passed during the autumn and winter, by Judge Maxwell, a pompous old gentleman, whose position and learning had long been the pride and the boast of Melville. The Judge was a good speaker, with a fund of excellent stories, both grave and gay, which he loved to relate, and related well, too. Generally speaking, it was Robert's delight to listen to him ; and he would sit, rapt in the closest attention, with his great bright eyes fixed upon the orator, drinking in every word. But to-day his recitation was not fully prepared ; and, dreading that he might fail in it, he had laid his book on his knee, and given

himself up to his lesson, hoping that, as the senior class sat in front of his own, his inattention might escape the observation of the speaker.

'But you'll get so absorbed that you won't know when to laugh,' said Charlie, to whom he had confided his difficulty and his intentions; 'and the old gentleman will mark you out as surely as anything.'

'Oh, you can poke me,' said Clements. 'Give me a knock, and I'll look up with such a smile that you'd never know but that I heard every word of it. I must study up, or I'll be floored.'

In another moment he was deep in his book, so completely lost among kings and emperors, thrones and dynasties, that he did not even notice when the Judge rose from his place among the Board of Examiners, six in number, and began to speak.

Charlie sat watching Robert with dancing eyes. The sonorous sentences rolled forth one after the other, but the boy never once lifted his head. Judge Maxwell's mind happened to run in a grave channel that morning. He was speaking of lives that had been failures in consequence of this or that hindrance to success, and told a story of a young man who had made shipwreck of his life through misfortunes which had their origin in idleness at school. It was a sad story, and the Judge told it with such gravity and solemnity that every face in the room was respectfully sober and sedate. All at once an irresistible impulse to make Clements look up with one of his broad smiles seized upon Charlie; and, without pausing to think, he gave him a sudden thrust with his elbow, whispering,

'Time to laugh, Rob,' suddenly and abruptly.

Startled from his deep abstraction, for he had been, as

usual, entirely lost to all around him, Robert lifted his head, and to Charlie's horror broke out into a hearty laugh.

There was an instant silence in the room. The Judge paused ; Mr. Braisted rose and looked sharply round to see who had made the disturbance, but before he had time to speak the orator went on with his story.

He had not proceeded much farther, when Charlie, who had been since his illness very subject to sudden turns of a rush of blood to his head, became very much flushed ; and Mr. Braisted, noticing his high colour, motioned him to go out into the air. The room was very warm, and, passing quietly from behind his desk, Charlie went out upon the piazza, where the cold December wind soon cooled his heated face and steadied his swimming head. He did not care to disturb the exercises by going back, and was, besides, afraid of a second attack if he returned ; so, as he had no recitation to make, he obtained Mrs. Braisted's permission to go for a walk through the woods until the review was ended.

Reaching home again just as the boys rushed out from the house, the terrible ordeal over, he ran up to ask how the examination had progressed.

'First-rate,' said Harry Clifford. 'Only two mistakes made in the whole class ; and the Board gave us no end of compliments and stuff. But Clements is in for it.'

'What ! Floored ?' exclaimed Charlie. 'I thought he'd get through.'

'Oh, he was all right on the lesson ; but Mr. Braisted was as mad as anything about his laughing out that way, and he called him up and lectured him right before the whole Board. It was tremendous. Why,



what's the matter with you, old man? You look as if you might be knocked over with a feather.'

'I did it,' said Charlie. 'I made him laugh; only I never thought he'd bellow out like that. I meant him to grin, and he went and roared like a bull. Where is he?'

'I don't know. He came out with the rest of us.'

'I mean Mr. Braisted, not Bob.'

'Oh, he's in the school-room.'

'I must go and tell him,' said Charlie, turning toward the house. 'Oh, there you are, Clements! What a spooney you were to shout so! But I'm going to tell Mr. Braisted.'

'What? That you set me on? Oh, no, Charlie; let it go! I've got through with it.'

'No, I won't,' said Charlie, drawing away from good-natured Clements' detaining hand. 'I'm not going to let the blame rest on you.'

'But wait a while, any way,' said Robert. 'The Board are all in there now.'

Charlie did pause at that. To face that company of six grey-haired men, to whom the whole school looked up with awe and reverence, was a serious thing; and one of them, too, the venerable speaker, whom he had thoughtlessly treated with extreme disrespect.

'Wait until they have gone,' said Clements. 'I tell you, if you knew how it felt to be called up before them, you wouldn't go into it of your own accord. It's all over now; what difference does it make?'

'Just this difference,' said Charlie, with sudden resolution: 'that you have been blamed for my fault; and my letting the thing rest there, or setting it right, is falsehood or truth. If you were called up before the Board, that is the very reason why I should clear you

before them ;' and he turned abruptly toward the piazza.

Harry stood on the lower step with a beaming face.

'Go ahead, old man ! I'm proud of you,' he said, grasping his hand as he passed him ; and Charlie went on, with a still braver heart, straight to the school-room door.

His breath came thick and fast as he knocked for permission to enter ; and when, in answer to Mr. Braisted's 'Come,' he opened the door, the paleness of his face startled the master.

'What is it, Charlie ? Are you ill ?' he said, rising from his seat, and coming toward him.

'No, sir,' replied Charlie, advancing to the table around which the other gentlemen were seated. 'I have come in to say, to you and to these gentlemen, that I am the only one to blame for the disturbance while Judge Maxwell was speaking. I am sorry, sir,' he added, turning his now burning face to the Judge, 'that I was so rude ; but I did not think Clements would laugh out so. He was in one of his turns, and I thought I'd make him smile ; but I'm honest, sir, when I say I never thought of his shouting the way he did. It's all my fault, sir, and I hope you won't blame Clements.'

'What do you mean by "one of his turns" ?' asked the Judge, gravely.

'Well, sir, he gets lost sometimes—gets dreaming, so that he don't know where he is nor what he's about, and we poke him up the wrong way often, just for fun. He was so this morning, and I nudged him, and told him it was time to laugh, thinking he'd look up with his big smile ; and the first thing I knew he roared out that way. But he isn't in fault, sir, it's only me ; for I don't

believe he even knew where he was, let alone that you were speaking. I'm sorry, sir, and heartily ashamed of myself;' and Charlie frankly lifted up his glowing face toward the seven pairs of eyes which were all closely watching him.

'And why did you not go to the Judge in private?' asked Mr. Braisted, wondering if he had conjectured the true reason.

How those bright eyes did shine as they turned themselves upon him!

'Because, sir, you spoke to Bob before these gentlemen; and I thought it was only fair that, as he had been blamed before them all, he should be cleared before them all. I wanted to be perfectly true and honourable about it, sir.'

'And you have been so,' said Judge Maxwell, rising from his seat and taking Charlie's hand. 'There is not one man here, I presume, who has so far forgotten the feelings of his boyhood as to fail to appreciate how hard a task this acknowledgment has been to a boy of your age. You said just now, my son, that you were heartily ashamed of yourself; but I think, if Mr. Braisted were asked, he would say that he was heartily proud of a pupil who has the courage and the manliness to do what you have done to-day.'

Mr. Braisted laid his hand on the boy's head as he stood beside him.

'I am proud of him, sir,' he said, looking down with a smile into the upturned face.

'But what he has done has not surprised me, nor will it surprise his comrades. We have all learned that Charlie Stockton's truth and honour may be fully trusted, and relied upon without a fear.'

Out into the open air again, with the glowing face and the shining eyes, to catch Clifford by the shoulders, and to cry out, half in laughter, half in tears, 'Hurra, Cliff! Hurra! Cheer for me, old boy! I can't get it out fast enough.'

And then, when Harry, perfectly bewildered by his wild excitement, prevailed upon him to sit down quietly, and tell him what he meant, he subsided; and with his eyes still full of light, but with a calmer manner, told him of all that had passed, ending by catching Clifford around the neck, and holding him closely, as he whispered,

'Think of Grandpa, Cliff! Oh, only just think of Grandpa!'

But when Clements and the other boys came crowding up, hearing that the interview was over, to learn the result, his answer was,

'Oh, it's all square, Bob. The big wigs know you're all right, and they were very easy on me too. It wasn't half as bad as I expected.'

There was not a lighter heart among the dozen boys who clambered noisily up on the top of the Melville coach on the day after the examination than that which beat beneath Charlie Stockton's jacket; and certainly no one of all the twenty scholars of the seminary enjoyed the brief holiday more thoroughly than he. And the hearts that met him in that home, which was now doubly dear and precious, were no less light than his.

Nor did they grow heavy with any weight of fear and doubt for his future as the years passed on; for through all the temptations and trials of his school-days, his college life, his years of study and of travel, until he came home at last, in the strength of his young manhood, to

be the stay and the joy of those who had so loved him, and to take up the work which Dr. Mason's hands began to find too heavy, he was kept pure and true by the thought of his grandfather's faith in him, which had, in its time, borne fruit in his own faith in a loving Father in heaven.

# OUR FOUR BOYS.



# OUR FOUR BOYS.

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## I.

### THE BOYS.

‘PORT your helm, Jack; she’s running in too close. There; now head her up the bay, and we’ll catch every breath that’s going.’

The boy spoken to, a sun-browned, bright-eyed fellow about fifteen years old, who sat in the stern of the beautiful little yacht, with his hand upon her rudder, obeyed the order given him by the speaker, a lad even browner and brighter-eyed than himself, who stood at the yard-arm ready to adjust the flapping sail as the vessel changed its course in obedience to the helmsman’s hand.

‘Where away now?’ said another voice. ‘What are you up to, Bert? You’re not going home, surely?’

Bertram Morton, evidently the captain of the youthful crew, turned toward the bow, whence the voice had issued, with a quizzical look in his laughing eyes.

‘Waked up, eh, Samson?’ he said, as, having fastened the sail, he threw himself down beside the coil of rope on which his brother had been quietly sleeping for the last hour. ‘What’s the news from dream-land?’

‘Dream-land! Why, I haven’t been asleep. I was only thinking.’



A shout of laughter from Jack and Bertram, echoed by still another voice from the tiny cabin below, to which the fourth member of the boating party had retired to prepare a chowder for supper, greeted this assertion.

'You must have been doing up a monstrous lot of reflect, then, for you've been more than an hour about it,' said Bertram. 'Look where we are.'

The boy raised himself on his elbow, and glanced round him with an amazed, incredulous expression, which drew another merry peal from his friends.

'Up to Hastings' Point already!' he said. 'That's a jolly go!'

'Thought pretty hard about it, didn't you?' said Bertram. 'Poor old Samson!' and he laid his hand on the boy's head as it sank down on the coil of rope once more, as if it were still too heavy to be raised from its rough pillow. 'Never mind, old boy; you'll be all right before long, and able to stand it with the best of us. Think away just as much as you like, no one shall disturb you;' and as the eyelids fell again, he sat quietly beside him, stroking the short curls back from his high forehead with a hand as gentle as a woman's.

'Poor old Samson!' The name was a curious burlesque on the slight figure, with its pale face and deep-set lustrous eyes; but Edward Morton loved it, in spite of its grotesqueness, for Bertram had given it to him six months ago, when, rousing from a stupor following a terrible fever which had all but cost him his vigorous young life, he had found himself, to his wondering surprise, unable to lift his hand or turn his head upon the pillow.

The name had greeted him then, spoken by Bertram's smiling lips,—lips that smiled, while yet the eyes, weary

and strained with the long, agonized watch by his bedside, were bright with unshed tears of unexpected joy—spoken in a voice which failed utterly in its effort to hide the depth of its unspeakable love and yearning. It was little wonder that he loved it, for it brought to his recollection day after day of patient care and watchfulness, tenderest nursing, and unselfish devotion; hours, too, when, wholly unused, poor boy, to any kind of weakness; his own patience, temper, all gave way beneath the lassitude and weariness which oppressed him, only to be met by a counter-current of love and cheerfulness that fairly swamped his irritability, carrying it under completely by the force of its resistless waves.

Two years before Edward's illness, the boys had been left by the death of their father almost alone in the world, having lost their mother while the younger brother was still a little baby. Jack Sheldon's father, their only uncle, had been abroad with his family at the time of his brother-in-law's death, and the two boys had been placed at boarding-school to await his return, which occurred about the time of Edward's recovery.

Finding the boy entirely unfit for study, Mr. Sheldon had taken him home at once to his own house, where he and Bertram had since remained, loved and cared for as affectionately as if they had been as dear to their uncle as his own two sons. And no observer could have decided which of 'our four boys,' as Mrs. Sheldon proudly termed her stud of somewhat rampant steeds, was the dearest and best beloved, unless, indeed, her tender, joyous watchfulness of Edward's every step, from utter weakness on toward his usual boyish strength, were taken as a proof that only a mother-heart could be so engrossed in her invalid charge.

'What in the world is Archie about?' asked Jack suddenly, turning toward Bertram a face most unbecomingly twisted out of its usual angles. 'He's getting up a most prodigious stench in that cabin.'

'Oh, I don't know. He's mixing one of his messes, I suppose. But it will taste good; his concoctions always do. Holloa, down there! You're choking us beforehand with your dinner, Archie. What are you cooking up?'

'Two cats and a dried witch,' called out a grave voice from below. 'Have a slice, my hearties?'

'We'll have you, if you don't keep your smells below decks,' replied Bertram, laughing. 'What are you up to?'

'Dinner,' was the laconic answer; and, knowing by experience that further questionings would hopelessly fail to win any further satisfaction, Bertram waited until the amateur cook should be ready to afford some better proof of the delicacy of his viands than that of the aroma which at that moment saluted their nostrils. His patience was rewarded at length by the appearance of Archie, bearing a generous dish of rich, creamy-looking chowder.

'Holloa, old boy! You've outdone yourself,' said Bertram, as the dish was set down before him. 'Come on, fellows, pitch in, or we'll be home before we can eat it up. But what did you make such a smell about it for?'

'I was killing two birds with one stone—burning up the mess that was lying round with the same fire that boiled the chowder. There were those old shoes that I cut up on the rocks at the Point, a couple of spoiled lemons, some papers, two or three sardine boxes, and four bad eggs; and I just made a general roast of them.'

'But why didn't you throw them overboard?' asked Jack, as the shout of laughter with which this list of articles for firewood was greeted spent itself.

'Oh, it was fun to see them burn,' said Archie; 'and it was kind of pokey all alone there. It was real jolly to see those shoes crisp up, and to watch the lead melting and running over them. But the lemons and the eggs were pretty bad, I confess. They did make an awful fugh-go, didn't they? Well, never mind, we'll know enough to throw them overboard next time. How are you, Samson? Have another dig into the stew?'

'No, I'm done for,' said Edward, as the great iron spoon with which Archie had filled the various plates was again plunged into the dish.

'What a chap! Why, you don't eat any more than a sick kitten, Ned! But the other fellows will make up for it. Here, my hearties, back up your carts.'

So the 'carts,' otherwise the plates, were 'backed up,' otherwise handed forward, and refilled with so generous a hand that the dish was speedily emptied of its savoury contents. This was the fifth meal that they had made that day, and it was only just sunset; but young fishermen have glorious appetites, and glorious powers of digestion as well, fortunately; and a chowder cooked by Archie's skilful hands went for just nothing at all with this party.

They made a pretty picture as they sat together in the fading light. Big Bertram, leaning with his back against the mast, the central figure in the group; broad-shouldered, large and strong of hand and limb, with short, dark curls clustering closely around the broad forehead, beneath which shone out a pair of keen, bright

eyes. Great, patient eyes they were; eyes which, as their quick glance met one's own, always held one for the moment; their curious blending of an expression of keenness and manly determination with an almost child-like or womanly trustfulness and patience striking every one who met the boy with interest and attention. A steady-going young fellow, but full of life and spirit, venturesome for himself, but very cautious for others, and careful as a mother of his young brother.

'Such a safe boy,' as Aunt Lilla often said, in a tone of great satisfaction and content.

Close beside him, with his shoulders supported against Bertram's knees, lay Ned, his colourless cheek seeming even more pale by contrast with the elder lad's ruddy countenance. His forehead was, like his brother's, broad and full; but the rings of hair which lay on the temples were almost golden in colour, and the soft blue eyes were wholly wanting in the resolution and firmness which made Bertram's eyes the marked feature of his sun-browned face. One could easily read the difference of character in the faces of the two boys. The one strong as a rock, able to withstand, alone and unaided, so far as human help was concerned, the troubles and vicissitudes of his daily life; ready to do battle with any foe; confident, too, in his own brave young heart, of winning the contest. The other, undecided, irresolute, fearful of failure, easily led and controlled, leaning always on the strength of another, and clinging to that other with a love that was almost idolatry. Quick in intellect, refined, gentle, and most loveable in disposition, Edward Morton was the pet of the household; but Aunt and Uncle, as well as the stronger elder brother, dreaded for him the time when he must go out into the world to

meet the snares and temptations with which he seemed so ill fitted to contend.

In front of Bertram, half way between him and the helmsman, lay Archie Sheldon, stretched out at full length upon the deck, his grave, sedate face turned up to the sunset sky, his hands thrusting themselves through and through his bushy locks, until each individual hair seemed to stand upright on its own responsibility. Plain almost to positive ugliness was the upturned countenance, and yet it was a right good, honest face,—such a face as one trusts at the first glance,—such an one as a little lost child, or a bewildered, perplexed soul of any age, would turn to for help with perfect confidence, not only in its honour and faithfulness, but in its sagacity as well. Mischievous it was, in spite of its gravity; but those kindly eyes would never look with anything but displeasure on a cruel act. Mischief which brought pain or loss to another would make them darken with anger, although they could kindle and dance most merrily in response to any bit of honest fun, even if he were himself its victim.

And the helmsman, with his handsome, happy, open face, what a picture he was of a thorough boy! His mother's delight, with his loving ways, his rich, sweet voice, his glad, joyous disposition, his beauty, and his grace; but his mother's great care and anxiety. The life of the house; the admired of all beholders for his wit, his handsome face, and a bewitching something in his manner and bearing that was irresistibly winning and attractive; hail-fellow-well-met with any one, no matter who; open-handed and generous to a fault, sacrificing anything or any one to the last or the most persistent demand upon him,—Jack Sheldon was that most de-

lightful (while innocent) character, 'a thorough good fellow,' as the world designates those whose gaiety, generosity, and talents make them the favourites of all whom they meet, but who unhappily are too often wanting in the firm principle and strength of determination which are the only safeguards against the vortex of temptation into which such an one is sure to be carried.

Many and many an anxious hour did the mother and father spend in talking over the faults and virtues of 'our four boys;' but over no one of them all did they linger with more concern, for none did they offer more earnest prayer, than for their unselfish, happy, volatile Jack,—the spoiled darling of the whole village, from old Judge Harvey, the dignified judge of the county court, down to the humblest tenant on Mr. Sheldon's large estate.

The sunset glow was fast fading into grey twilight, when the little party, all pretty well tired with their day's fishing, sprang ashore, and, heavily laden with their spoils, walked up a narrow pathway toward the main road which led to their home,—a large old-fashioned house, which stood on the summit of a high hill, looking down upon the bay on whose waters the boys had spent the long summer day.

'There's mother at the window,' said Jack, as they came within sight of the house. 'Hallo, there, little mother! Here we are!' and, with a bounding step, he sprang up the road to meet her; for she had left her seat in the window at his call, and, as the group reached the steps of the piazza, stood there to welcome them, enwrapped already in Jack's vigorous embrace.

'How are you, little mother?—pretty lonely?' asked the boy, throwing his arms around her, and kissing her

most heartily, first on one cheek and then on the other. 'We made a day of it, didn't we?'

'Yes. I was just beginning to think it was time for you to make your appearance. All safely back again, eh? and not too tired, Ned?'

As usual, although her hand rested on the broad shoulder of her own healthy, ruddy boy, her eye was on the one pale face in the group.

'Oh, I'm all right!' said Ned, cheerily; but he came up the steps with slow, lingering feet, and sat down at their head, as if he had not strength to drag his weary limbs a yard farther.

'Poor fellow! you are just worn out,' said Mrs. Sheldon. 'But supper is ready; that will set you up again. I'll go and tell David to bring it right in, while you all run upstairs and make yourselves presentable.'



## II.

### A NEW PLAN.

FIFTEEN minutes later, quite a metamorphosis in their appearance having been effected in that short time, the four boys were gathered around the table, discussing cold chicken, hot biscuits, etc., with an energy which proved that the various chowders which they had consumed during the day had not in the slightest degree affected their appetite for their customary supper. But they were not too busy to talk; and the voluble tongues kept pace with the clattering knives and forks, as they gave to the 'little mother,' who sat behind the tea-urn, a full recital of every adventure and incident of the day, as sure of her interest in all their plans and pursuits, and her enjoyment of their fun and frolics, as if she had been one of themselves.

The story of Ned's fit of meditation, the list of Archie's curious combustibles, everything interesting or amusing to themselves which had occurred during the day, was recited for her entertainment, and enjoyed by her with such merriment as soon drew Mr. Sheldon from his retreat in the library, whither he had gone to examine some papers of which he wished to make use in the morning.

'Well, what is all the fun?' he said, coming into the dining-room. 'What is it, Ned?' and he laid his hand on his nephew's head, as he paused behind his seat. 'You seem to be the only still one here. Are they laughing at you?'

'No, sir. I am enjoying it too; only I take it a little more quietly than they do.'

'Too quietly by far,' said Mr. Sheldon, the smile which had brightened his face giving place to a look of grave concern, as he noticed that the boy had scarcely touched his supper. 'I'll have to take you in hand if you don't do better than this. Look here, you burly fellows over there,' and he shook his hand threateningly toward his own rosy-cheeked lads; 'what do you mean by bringing this young man home with such a face as this after a day on the water?'

'Can't do anything with him, sir,' replied Jack, shaking his head despondingly. 'Laid him out in the sun to roast, cooked up the nicest messes you ever saw, stuffed him with chowder until he couldn't swallow, and here he is as you see him. What is a fellow to do?'

'Oh, I'm all right!' said Ned, a little impatiently; for he hated to hear any allusion to his want of strength. 'I'm only tired.'

'But a boy of fourteen has no business to be tired out by a day's boating. Tired means too much when it comes every day, and brings with it a white face and heavy eyes. What shall we do, Lilla? Shall we send him away for a few weeks?'

'Would you like it?' asked Aunt Lilla, for she had noticed that the heavy eyes lighted at the proposition.

'Yes, I would so,' said Ned eagerly. 'I just feel as if I'd like to be made all over new. I'd like to go somewhere where I've never been before, to do things I've never done before, and to see things I've never seen before. I'm not sick, but I feel as if I wanted everything different from what it is.'

'You do?' said Uncle Will, laughing. 'Suppose I

send you down to Nova Scotia with Captain Rankin? He is going down next week.'

'Oh, William!' exclaimed Aunt Lilla in dismay; but Ned's pale face was in a moment all aglow with delight.

'Oh, that would be jolly! Let's all go!' and he sprang up from his seat with an amount of animation which no one had seen in him for weeks. 'When does he sail, Uncle Will?'

'On Wednesday; but we won't pack your trunk to-night. See Aunt Lilla's face. She thinks we are beside ourselves to talk of your leaving home.'

'No, not of his leaving home. I don't doubt that it would do him a world of good to take some pleasure jaunt to Niagara, or the White Mountains, or some such place; but Nova Scotia! Why, you might as well start off for Van Diemen's Land, or the Sandwich Islands!'

'Why, mother, it would be the jolliest lark ever was!' said Jack excitedly. 'Come on, father; do go. It is the gayest notion you've had in a long time. What do you say, fellows?'

The 'fellows' would doubtless, judging by their faces, have given a most hearty consent, if they had been allowed time to answer; but Mr. Sheldon struck in just here with a remark which, for one instant, cooled Jack's ardour a little.

'You won't need to go, Jack,' he said gravely. 'I was only speaking of my chalky-faced lad here, and perhaps Bertram; he would need to be with him as chief nurse.'

Jack looked very blank for a moment; but sober Archie came to the rescue in his quiet, assured manner.

'It would be no end pokey for those two chaps to start off by themselves. What Ned wants is a regular

shaking up, and he'll never get that poking off alone with Bert.'

'Good for you, Solomon,' said Jack, merrily, giving him a resounding slap on his broad shoulder. 'What do you say to that, father? You'll have to let us go with Ned now, won't you?'

'I do not even know that Ned is going yet,' said Mr. Sheldon, with an amused smile. 'You boys are settling all this on your own responsibility.'

'But if he does go,' persisted the irrepressible Jack.

'Then it will be time enough to talk about it,' replied his father. 'I made the suggestion on the spur of the moment, more in joke than in earnest. But really, Lilla,' turning toward his wife, 'I think it worth consideration.'

It certainly received consideration, at least from the younger part of the family. Nova Scotia was the theme of conversation among the boys for the evening. The largest map of the province to be found in the house was brought out, and eagerly studied; the ways and means of reaching the desired haven noisily discussed; the route by sea, and overland as well, traced out over and over again; until finally the boys retired to their rooms, only to dream, however, of that (to them) imaginary land, Nova Scotia, and to wake in the morning with the full determination to carry out this delightful project, if coaxing and persuasions could gain their point.

'Jack,' said Archie, as they were going downstairs to the breakfast-room the next morning, after having spent every moment of the time occupied in dressing themselves in discoursing upon their longed-for jaunt, 'suppose we keep quiet about this Nova Scotia business to-day. It won't do us any good to run the thing into the

ground. We went at father pretty well last night ; and although I don't think he'd mind a dose or two of the matter, he probably don't care to take it as a regular diet.'

'Just what I was thinking of myself,' replied Jack. 'If there's any talking to be done about it, we'll leave it to Bert and Ned—if I can,' he added, with an apparent doubt of his own powers of reticence.

'You must,' was the decisive answer, which Jack simply responded to with a laugh, as they entered the breakfast-room.

Whether their two cousins had, on their part, arrived at the same conclusion to which they had come, Jack and Archie did not know, but not a word was spoken on the all-important subject, either at the breakfast table, or at any other time prior to Mr. Sheldon's departure for town. But, on his return in the evening, all the boys' highest anticipations were realized. He had seen, first, Ned's physician, who had endorsed the project most heartily, saying that such a change was the very medicine the boy needed ; and then Captain Rankin, who had not only promised to see them safely to their journey's end, but had also offered to give them a home with his own family so long as they should desire to remain in the province.

Aunt Lilla listened in dismay to this sudden announcement. To be sure she had, after a long talk with her husband the night before, given her consent in case the doctor approved of the plan, but the whole affair had been settled in such a rapid and business-like manner that it fairly seemed to take her breath away ; and she sat looking in silent consternation from her husband to the excited quartette of boys who stood around him,

each testifying his delight in the manner most characteristic of himself.

Bertram had seized his uncle's hand, and was shaking it violently, thanking him enthusiastically for all the trouble he had taken on their behalf; while Ned, with his hand upon his brother's shoulder, stood waiting to follow his example. If Bertram had turned a somersault, or stood on his head, he would have done the same. On a chair, drawn as close to his father's side as it could possibly be placed, sat Archie, his elbows resting on his knees, his hands supporting his upturned face, whose whole expression, as it was lifted to Mr. Sheldon, was in most perfect keeping with the only words which had escaped him since his father had begun to speak. 'I tell you, boys, we've got just the jolliest father any lot of fellows ever had!' While Jack, having first turned to his mother with 'Oh, little mother! I'm afraid you'll be lonely,' had caught her in his arms, giving her a resounding kiss; and then, as suddenly releasing her, had sprung upon the back of Archie's chair, and hurrahed until he was fairly hoarse.

'Come, come, young man; enough is as good as a feast,' said Mr. Sheldon, when he had borne with his son's vociferous expression of delight as long as human nature could be expected to endure the racket. 'Supper is ready, I see, and you must certainly need some support after all that expenditure of strength.'

'Why, I couldn't help it, father,' said Jack, descending from his pedestal, and reaching his place at the table with one and the same leap. 'I was absolutely choking with it. I had to let it come.'

'So it seemed,' replied Mr. Sheldon. 'I am afraid that even my rough old captain may be somewhat

startled if you indulge in such demonstrations when you are established in his home. I shall have to trust a great deal to you, boys,' he added, more gravely. 'You must see to it that you do not abuse my confidence.'

He was answered at once by the most earnest promises of faithfulness to the trust reposed in them from all but Archie. He simply said, 'Yes, sir,' and lifted up his great, honest eyes, and looked straight into his father's face.

'Captain Rankin lives at Yarmouth, doesn't he, father?' asked Jack, taking advantage of a moment's pause.

'Yes. Not in Yarmouth proper, but on Cape Forchu, a rocky point which runs out from the coast, and on which there is a fine lighthouse. My idea is, that you should remain with him, boarding in his family as long as you shall find it pleasant there, and then go to Yarmouth. Mr. Spencer, whom you will all remember, lives in the town; and he told me that if any of us were inclined to go to the provinces at any time, he would be very glad to accommodate us. Of course I do not mean to send him such a noisy delegation as you four wild boys would prove; but I shall write to him to-night that you are going up, and shall ask him to look after you a little. Rankin says that there is a very good hotel in the town if you tire of the Cape. That, however, he thinks an impossibility, there being, in his judgment, no such place on the face of the earth as Cape Forchu.

'And is there nothing on the Cape but the lighthouse?' asked Jack, the eagerness in his kindling face reflected in those of all the other boys at the thought of this delightful possibility. 'Do we have to go back to the mainland for all our supplies, and everything?'

'Yes, and not only so, but you must go in boats,' said

Mr. Sheldon, with a laughing glance at his wife, as he noticed that Jack was already using the possessive case.

‘And I suppose there’s any amount of fishing and crabbing, and all that sort of thing?’

‘Yes; and salmon-spearing, and torch-fishing by night, and all kinds of sea-side delights. This lake is not a circumstance to the waters up there. You boys are pretty good boatmen and fishermen, considering your opportunities; but Captain Rankin will show you some things you have never dreamed of, unless I am much mistaken. At any rate, he flatters himself that he will do so, and seems quite determined that you shall not tire of your new home through his fault. His son is to assume command of the “Argonaut” after this trip; and the captain will take a rest of a few weeks, until the “Lilla” is finished. She will be ready for her first voyage early in September, and I have promised to put him in command.’

‘Does he live all alone on the Cape, Uncle?’ asked Bertram, looking up with a face quite as much flushed and excited as Jack’s.

‘No. In the first place, he has a wife and daughter; and in the second place, the keeper of the light lives on the Point, of course.’

‘I wonder if he has any boys,’ said Ned.

‘No. I was asking Rankin about the family this morning, and he says that old Mr. Hurst has only one son, a young man about twenty-five years old; so, as far as the society of lads of your own age is concerned, you will have to entertain yourselves. To tell the truth, I am not sorry that it is so. I am not at all afraid to trust you under Bertram’s leadership; but I do not know that I should feel quite so safe if there were a half



boys run away and leave her ; do you ?' And he threw himself down at her feet, and laid his head in her lap.

'I would not keep one of them at home to lose so much pleasure as this trip seems to promise,' she said, leaning over him, and taking the happy, handsome face between her soft hands. 'I am only rather anxious about those same little boys of mine. But I think that they all mean to be faithful boys.'

'Yes, they do, mother ;' and, for the moment, Jack's face was almost as grave as Archie's own. 'You may trust us, every one.'

She bent down and kissed the broad brow as his eyes were raised to hers, and smiled her answer to his promise.

### III.

#### OFF ON THEIR TRAVELS.

'You'll have the vessel pretty much to yourselves, young gentlemen,' said Captain Rankin, as, having waved their last farewell to Mr. Sheldon, who had accompanied them to the schooner, the four boys stood leaning against the taffrail, watching the sailors, who, with their musical 'Ho, ho, heave ho!' were adjusting their sails to catch every breath of the brisk wind which was carrying the 'Argonaut' merrily out of Boston harbour.

'We are not the only passengers, are we?' asked Jack. 'I thought I saw one or two people below.'

'No; there is a gentleman, Mr. Vickars, and his wife and son. Here comes the boy, now.'

As the captain spoke, a young fellow sauntered slowly across the deck toward the little party; and, with a nod which seemed to comprise them all in its easy, nonchalant recognition, took his place beside Jack, who stood at the end of the line.

'We've a good breeze in our favour,' he said, without pausing for any word of introduction to his new companions. 'How long will it take us to reach Yarmouth at this rate, captain?'

'From thirty-six to forty hours, unless we run into a fog and have to lie by. Will that be long enough to suit you?'

'Yes, I think so. Certainly it will be for my lady

mother. She is the sickest thing you ever saw already. What's the matter, my friend ?'

The question was addressed to Archie, whose grave eyes had lifted themselves to the speaker's face with a surprised look, and were still fixed upon him with a searching expression, which seemed to be reading him through and through.

'Nothing,' replied Archie, quietly, turning away as he spoke. 'Captain Rankin, may we go up on the poop ?'

'Yes, anywhere you like, so you don't break your necks, or spill yourselves overboard. Luff a bit, there, boys ! another p'int to the north'ard.'

Archie paused a moment to watch the sailors as they obeyed the order given them.

'Come on, Bert, let's go up on the forecastle,' he said, linking his arm in Bertram's, as the vessel sped upon her course even [more swiftly than before ; and, leaving Jack and Ned with their new companion, the two older boys went out to the bow of the schooner, and, taking up their position at the very bowsprit, leaned out to watch the foaming water as it parted with a rush before the swift-cutting keel.

'How do you like that chap, Bert ?' asked Archie at length.

'He is too big for me,' replied Bertram. 'Too much shiny hat and watch-chain, in the first place ; and too much "I'm as fine as anybody." He's no good.'

'No ; he'd never speak so of his mother if he weren't a mean chap. "The sickest thing you ever saw !" I'd half a mind to box his ears for him.'

'Maybe he's better than he looks,' said Bertram. 'I rather think he's a quick, smart fellow ; and his manner is pleasant enough if it wasn't for his airs. He's friendly

and sociable. At any rate, he is likely to be thrown in with us pretty constantly for the next day or two, so we may as well make the best of him.'

For an hour or more the two boys sat upon the coil of rope where they had taken their place, enjoying to the full the fresh, keen wind as it came sweeping across the bay, before they were joined by their brothers; and when they did come to look for them, they were both loud in their praises of 'Fred Vickars,' as their new acquaintance had instructed them to call him.

'He's just splendid, Archie,' said Jack excitedly. 'You'll like him, I'm sure, for he knows lots, and tells it all so nicely, too—makes one understand it, you know.'

'And he's been to Europe, and seen everything there, and seems to know so many great people,' interrupted Ned, who was somewhat aristocratic in his ideas. 'His father is very rich, too, and Fred has any quantity of money to spend.'

'You seem to have found out a good deal in a very short time,' said Bertram, laughing. 'Here, Ned, come and lean against me; you look tired. How do you feel, old man?'

'All jolly,' replied Ned, as he availed himself of the support offered him. 'This wind is blowing marrow into my bones, I do believe. But what is the reason you don't like Fred Vickars, Bert?'

'I haven't said that I did not like him,' said Bertram. 'I have had no time to make up my mind on the point; but I confess I don't fancy his manner.'

'Oh, you'll soon grow used to that,' said Jack, with as much confidence as if Vickars had been his friend for years. 'They are nice people, too; his father is very rich.'

'Yes, so you told us before; but he may not be a gentleman for all. I don't see that the fact of their being rich makes them nice people to know.'

'Oh, he's very gentlemanly; Fred, I mean,' said Jack.

'Then he'd better show it by speaking decently of his mother. Any fellow that calls his mother a "thing," and "the sickest thing" at that, to a lot of chaps who have never seen either her or him before, isn't what I call gentlemanly, that's all;' and Archie, who seemed suddenly to have roused up from his delighted contemplation of the rushing waters beneath him to a sense of what was going on at his side, closed his speech with such an expression of disgust and indignation as raised a merry laugh at his expense, even from Bertram, who so much shared his feelings on the subject.

'Why, Archie, one would think he had attacked the little mother herself,' said Jack. 'You don't mean to take up the cudgels for every mother under the sun, do you, Solomon?'

'I don't know,' said Archie, who had joined good-naturedly in the laugh raised against himself, speaking now in a musing, thoughtful tone; 'but it always seems to me, boys, as if our own "little mother," as Jack calls her, made a claim on us for tenderness toward all other mothers; and I always feel, when I hear any fellow speak as that Vickars did just now, as if somehow mother herself had been almost insulted.'

'That's right, my lad,' said a hearty voice close beside them; and, glancing up, the boys saw Captain Rankin at their very elbows. 'You were so busy talking that you never heard my tread, did you?' he asked, seating himself on the ropes. 'I don't know what you were saying, though, for I only caught the last words of my brave lad

here, who seems to love all women for love of his own mother. Is that so, my boy ?' and the brown, weather-beaten old face looked tenderly down into Archie's, as a rough, hard hand was laid upon his shoulder.

'I don't know about that exactly,' said quiet Archie, his face flushing crimson at the thought that his earnest words had been overheard. 'But I can't bear to hear any one speak carelessly of his mother.'

'That's right, lad ; and don't you ever try to use yourself to hearing such things either. There's a man in this ship to-night as would give his right hand to take back a cruel word he once spoke to his mother. A grey-haired man he is, and that hard word was spoken thirty year ago ; but it's in his memory, and in his very hearin' yet, and will be till they lay his grey head down beside her, and he goes up above to tell her how sore that word grieved him after once it was said.'

The grey head—they all knew in their kindly young hearts that it was this very head now bent before them—dropped slowly down upon the old captain's breast ; and he sat for a few moments so lost in thought, that he quite forgot the presence of the now silent little group around him.

'Ah, boys,' he said at length, suddenly lifting himself from his bent posture, and turning his face full upon them, 'sometimes it comes upon me sudden-like the remembrance of it, as if it were but just done,—a new thing to me, and all the grief and sorrow of it something that I didn't know how to bear nowadays. More times it's just a kind of dark spot in my sky, kind of shadowin' everything ; but whiles it comes upon me very sore and sharp. I'll tell you how it was if ye'd like to hear the story ; and maybe the tale of an old man's grief over a

sin long past, but never forgot, will be a help to you some day when you're tempted in your turn. Will I tell you the tale ?'

'If it won't make you feel badly, sir,' said Bertram gently ; and Archie moved a trifle nearer to the captain, and laid his hand upon his knee.

'It had been a hard time with me,' said the old sailor ; 'a very hard and anxious time. There had been sickness at home and losses at sea, for I sailed my own ship then, or had done it till I lost her in a dreadful gale one night, and was but just saved myself, me and my men. For months everything had been running behind ; and I, havin' been always a forehanded man, was fast gettin' disheartened and discouraged. I don't say this for an excuse for myself, boys ; I'm only just tellin' you how it all was. Well, things were goin' on pretty bad, when one day I went into town, and was told the first thing by a friend of mine, a lawyer who was tryin' to straighten out my affairs a little, that my house, my home that I lived in, and the only real bit of property I had left, wasn't mine at all ; that there was something mortally wrong in the drawin' up of my papers, and that my title to it wasn't worth a red herrin'. And more than that, the man that had found this out and claimed the property was a bitter enemy of mine,—the only one I had in the world, too. That was the dreadfulest day, from its beginnin' to its end, that I ever spent. All day long I was runnin' about, tryin' what I could do, only to find that I was as helpless as a baby, and that my wife and little children, and my old mother, who had been struck paralytic a while back, and couldn't lift hand or head, would soon be turned out of house and home. I went home that worried and distressed that I was near beside

myself, and told them all the truth. My wife took it very quiet and composed ; but mother couldn't seem to believe it, and she was for havin' me try this and that and the other, and was sure that if I'd speak to such and such a man he would help me, and all that, till I was nigh distracted. She was just the best and lovin'-est mother ever was. Ay, boy,' and he smiled down into Archie's face, 'I don't think even the mother that you stand by so bravely could beat her, at least noways particular. But since she'd been sick she'd taken to worryin' and frettin' a good deal, and things had been so with me that I couldn't seem to stand it that day ; and when at last she came to say that she knew that if I'd go to this man what held the other title, and talk with him, we'd be all right, and to tease me to go, I lost all patience, and said out very sharp and sudden, "No, mother, I won't, and there's the end of it."

'Mother started as if she was frightened ; and well she might, for I had never spoken to her like that in all my life. But she didn't say one word, she only looked at me with such a face as I had never seen on her before, so awful sorrowful and pained. I wanted then to tell her I was sorry ; but my heart was just packed full of bitterness and anger, and I wouldn't, but took up my hat and went out of the door. It was growin' dusk, and I loitered about on the far end of the Point, the tide bein' out, until I heard my wife callin' me out of the darkness, for I'd been away nigh a couple of hours then. Her voice sounded frightened, and I ran to find her, with a dreadful fear in my heart of I didn't know what.

' "Mother has had another stroke," she said ; and we ran back to the house as swift most as if we'd had wings to our feet. Mother hadn't moved since last I saw her.



It had just come upon her silent and quiet, as it sometimes does. Even her face hadn't changed ; that dreadful, hurt, distressed look was on it yet, and it never left it. It was on it when she died ; it was on it when we laid it in the coffin, and they shut it away from my grievin' eyes ; and it's been in my heart ever since. For a while I was distraught with the thought that the sudden start might have brought on the stroke ; but the doctor told me it wasn't so ; that he'd seen it comin' for days past, and had warned my wife, but hadn't told me because I was so full of troubles already. My wife, too, said the same. But it wasn't no use talkin'. All they can say can't make me disremember that I sent my lovin' old mother up to heaven with a heart-broken face. Oh, boys, be tender of your mothers ! It mayn't be often that a man has no chance to ask forgiveness for a hard and cruel word ; but even though he may ask it, and it may be freely given, I tell you he'll carry the scar of it in his heart through all time. He may not feel the mark much while she is left in his home with him, and he can be tryin' to make up for it by doin' little nothin's of love and duty for her ; but when she's gone above, and he can't ease himself by tendin' on her, I tell you that scar will begin to burn and sting him, and he can never wholly forget it.'

It was a very grave and quiet little group that sat around the old captain as he ceased speaking ; so very grave that, after a moment's silence, he said, in his usual brisk and cheery voice,

'Well, my lads, I mustn't preach too long, or you'll think I'm a hard old salt to sail under ; only I always feel to warn young folks from the sharp rock where my own vessel got a bad hole stove in her. Keep your

barks off that point, my boys ; and the hope that my tale will be a help to you will aid to take the sharpness from my own pain. You're wantin' me, Wilson ?'

The mate of the schooner had stepped up upon the forecastle, evidently in search of some one ; and he answered,

'Yes, sir. There's fog lying out here ;' and he pointed away to the edge of the horizon, as it seemed to the boys, where a thin bluish line, almost imperceptible to the eye of a landsman, lay on the water. 'Shall we take in sail, sir ?'

'Scarcely. I've been watchin' it this half hour, and it's comin' rather slow. We can afford to let her run a mile or two yet.'

'It seems as if it would take a long time for that far-away mist to reach us,' said Jack, peering out to try to discover something more distinct than the slight haze which he could hardly distinguish.

'Not longer than twenty minutes or so,' replied the captain. 'You don't know our fogs up here. Just wait half-an-hour, and tell me what you think of the far-away mist then. You'll be willing to turn in about that time, I think.'

The thin blue line began to lift itself and to spread across the moonlit sky ; and soon the captain's voice, at a little distance from them now, gave the order to take in all sail. Nearer and nearer came the heavy fog, dank and wet, until it wrapped the whole vessel in its close grey folds. Then came the command to drop anchor ; and the little ship, but a few moments since speeding along so merrily on her way, lay almost motionless on the lifeless atmosphere, with great drops of wet dripping slowly down from every bit of rope, and every corner

which offered a point of contact to the drenching fog ; while the light which had burned so brightly at the mast-head grew fainter and fainter, struggling dimly through the gloom.

‘Ugh, this is horrid!’ said Ned, as he indignantly dashed a heavy drop of water from the end of his nose. ‘Just squeeze your eyes tight shut, boys, and feel the fog run off your lashes.’

A merry laugh proclaimed the result of the experiment, as the drops oozed slowly down their already wet cheeks ; but a vote to go below was at once carried without a dissenting voice.

‘Turning in for the night, eh?’ said the captain, meeting them as they groped their way slowly across the vessel in the all-pervading darkness. ‘I didn’t think you’d stand it long. It’s pretty wettish, isn’t it? You don’t know what a real, thorough fog is in your part of the world. Well, a good night and a bright sunrise to you!’

#### IV.

##### OUT AT SEA.

'COME on, Ned, if you want to see the sunrise,' said Bertram, shaking his brother by the shoulder. 'We haven't much time to spare.'

Sleepy Ned lifted his heavy eyelids slowly, as if the sunrise were a great bore at that particular moment; but the next instant a tremendous crash, and a series of thumps and knockings upon the partition wall between the state-room occupied by himself and his brother and that adjoining it, roused him very fully from his slumbers.

'All up for sunrise!' shouted Jack's voice. 'Ned, ahoy!'

'Ay, ay, sir!' responded Bertram, with his lips against the dividing boards; and in a very few moments the whole party were on deck once more.

Where was the fog? Not a sign of it was to be seen. All around them lay the deep-blue sea, and above them hung a cloudless sky, just touched, away to the eastward, by the rosy glow of the coming sun. The captain's wish for a bright sunrise for them seemed likely to be very fully answered, for already the pink light was beginning to spread far up towards the zenith, deepening every moment in richness of colour. By and by, as they watched, a crimson glow shot up from the horizon, and the next instant the whole eastern sky seemed to pulse and tremble with the flood of light which rolled across it; another moment, and the sun itself rose gloriously

from the sea, flushing the heavens with such brightness that the boys were fain to hide their dazzled eyes from his burning splendour.

'That's worth an early turn-out, young gentlemen ; don't you say so ?' and turning toward the speaker, the boys found Captain Rankin gazing out upon the beautiful picture.

'Yes, indeed,' said Bertram enthusiastically. 'I never saw a sunrise at sea before, and this was such a magnificent one.'

'Oh, this is mere lamplight !' said another voice. 'Wait until you have an opportunity of seeing a sunrise on the ocean itself. It is nothing on these little bays.'

'A glorious nothing, I should say,' replied Bertram, as Fred Vickars sauntered up to where he and his companions stood.

Captain Rankin had turned toward the new-comer as he spoke, with a curious expression of amusement and contempt on his rugged face.

'I don't know as old Atlantic himself can beat this,' he said quietly. 'I've sailed back and forth from this side to the other a score of times and more ; but I think I never saw a grander sight of the sun than this that we've looked upon this morning. Don't go to talkin' light of what's about you, my man, for the purpose of making folks think you've had better. There's no honour nor manliness in it. The best way to teach folks that you've been far and seen much, is to let them see that the soul within you has broadened and grown in the enjoyment of advantages which the Lord don't think fit to give to all. Is this your first experience of the sea, Master Morton ?'

He had turned from the astonished and somewhat chagrined boy, whose disagreeable air of pretension had so annoyed him, to Bertram, laying his hand upon his shoulder as he spoke.

‘Yes; I have never been out of sight of land before. Jack and Archie have been over to the other side, but Ned and I are very green seamen.’

‘Then you’ll see much, even on this little bay,’—and the captain’s eyes twinkled mischievously,—‘to amuse and to delight you too. How does it strike you, Mr. Ned? Are you satisfied with our old Bay of Fundy?’

‘I think I’m disappointed,’ said Ned. ‘I had an idea that one would be almost overwhelmed by the sight of the sea and sky all about them. I expected to feel so small, and so—’

He hesitated for a word to express the thought that was in his mind, and the captain’s hearty laugh interrupted him.

‘And you find, after all, that you feel about as large as common, eh? Well, you’re not the first that’s said the same to me. But wait a while, my lad. Perhaps it is that at the first sight of it one hasn’t the power of eye to take it all in. Wait till midday, and then tell us how it is. I think that by then you’ll say that these blue waters is very wide, and that the great sky above us is just fittin’ for the footstool of our God.’

‘I hope we’ll meet no end of vessels,’ said Jack, breaking the little silence which had followed Captain Rankin’s words. ‘Do you hail them, captain, when you meet?’

‘Sometimes,’ said the captain, smiling at his eagerness. ‘We may meet the “Petrel;” she should be due about this time, if she has had fair weather. I hope we may,

for she's as pretty a craft as we often see in these waters.'

'Where is she from?' asked Ned.

'From Glasgow, bound to St. John. Look here, my lads. Do you want to see what sort of plants we grow in these parts?'

He pointed over the side of the vessel as he spoke; and the boys, looking down into the water, saw spreading around them the long, slender leaves of a richly coloured sea-plant. Fully two yards in length, the deep crimson line which ran through the centre toned gradually down to a faint pink, which melted almost imperceptibly into the golden band which edged each giant leaf, they floated to and fro in the flow of the water, looking much as if they might have been dropped from the beautiful sky, which had so shortly before been painted with the same gorgeous hues.

'Oh, wouldn't the little mother just go crazy over these?' exclaimed Jack. 'Look here, you fellows, at this monster one. Couldn't we get some of them, captain? I'd give anything to carry one of them home.'

'It wouldn't look like this when you had it there, my lad, nor even when you got it aboard. They're not much to look at above the water; indeed, they're quite dim and dull lookin' in colour, and very slimy to the touch. Like many another thing, they're very good in their place, and not nigh so well outside of that. Did you ever see anything like this before, Master Vickars?'

Fred Vickars had been leaning over the side of the vessel, sullenly silent ever since the captain's reproof had thrown a damper on his boastful self-assertion, and the old seaman evidently thought that it was time to coax him into good humour again. His effort at conciliation

failed, however ; for, with a gruff 'I dare say ; I never cared for sea-weed particularly,' the boy moved a little farther from the group, and stood, as he had done before, gazing sulkily down into the water.

But a little later, seeing that Captain Rankin had left the boys to amuse themselves as they might, he threw off his ill-humour, and, returning to them, entered into conversation with Bertram.

Much as there was to dislike in Frederick Vickers' manner and disposition, he was by no means a disagreeable companion. The spoiled child of a weak, indulgent mother, and of a father whose whole soul was engrossed in money-making ; brought up to consider that money was the chief good of life, and that he who had the largest fortune was the greatest man,—the boy was more to be pitied than blamed by those who were annoyed or amused by his purse-proud arrogance. He was a quick, intelligent young fellow, well informed for his years, and possessing a great deal of ready tact and ingenuity, which, unfortunately, he did not always use for the best purposes. He had not been slow to perceive that Bertram had not been in the least affected in his favour ; and, seeing that he was the acknowledged leader of the little party, upon whom he desired to make a pleasant impression, he set himself to the task of winning his good opinion. To Bertram's surprise, he talked easily and gracefully on almost every subject, showing an acquaintance unusual in one so young with both men and things ; and, as the early morning hours wore away, Bertram wondered more and more that he had been so disagreeably impressed on the previous evening.

Archie, too, who had soon joined them, was won to forget his dislike, and sat quietly listening to the con-



versation, only throwing in a word or two now and then in his sober way, but enjoying himself heartily nevertheless. The Vickars had but just returned from the Continent, and Archie's own travels were yet so fresh in his memory as to make the recalling of each little incident and the discussing of every point of interest a great pleasure to him ; and when at length Vickars was summoned below by his father, he left his two companions with a very different feeling toward him from that which they had at first conceived.

'Why, Bert, he seems quite a sensible fellow, after all,' said Archie, as Fred disappeared from their view descending the cabin stairs. 'I like him first-rate. He has such an easy way of talking. It's jolly to know that he has just come from all those places where we were, and to talk them over with him. It seems to bring it all back to one so. I'm right glad we've met him, aren't you ?'

'Well, yes,' replied Bertram, rather uncertainly, 'he's very entertaining ; and yet, Archie, I don't think I really like him. There is something about him, both in his manner and in his face, that I don't fancy. He don't seem good and trusty, Archie. I don't believe that the fellow is altogether open and above-board.'

'Why, what makes you think that, Bert ? That's hardly fair, is it ?'

'Perhaps not, but I feel so, and I can't help it either. I've been trying to persuade myself out of it ever since we have been sitting talking here, and I can't do it.'

'But you haven't any reason for distrusting him ? He made himself very disagreeable last night, trying to set himself up as cock of the walk ; but I don't see why you think he's tricky. That's kind of mean, Bert,

to come down on a fellow of whom you don't know any harm.'

'All right. I won't say anything more about him, then,' said Bertram. 'Perhaps I am mistaken, and I hope I am. Where are the other fellows, do you know?'

'I haven't seen them since breakfast. Halloo!'

The shout was given in answer to a cheer from Jack, who, half-way up the rigging of the main-mast, had paused to wave his hat and cheer to the very extent of his powerful young lungs; while Ned stood below, looking up with a face whose longing expression told how irksome was the weakness which held him back from so many boyish sports and enjoyments. In another moment Archie was climbing the ropes with the agility of a monkey; while Bertram joined Ned, too thoughtful for him to leave him alone.

'Halloa, there, man aloft! Do you sight a vessel in the offing?' asked the captain.

'No, sir, not one,' replied Jack, after a glance around the horizon.

'Then you'd best come down, for we see clearer below here than you do above. There's a big ship out there. I doubt it's the "Petrel" herself. Look here, my man,' and he turned to Ned, who was eagerly scanning the horizon for some sign of the, to him, invisible ship; 'wasn't you the lad that was sayin' this mornin' that you was a bit disappointed? Come here and watch this ship. I doubt you'll find that the sea is some bigger than a good-sized wash-tub after all.'

'I think so now,' said Ned, laughing. 'It seems to grow and grow every moment, almost. It looks a great deal more as I expected it would now than it did this morning. But I don't see any ship, captain.'

'Right out here she is. You see that bit of white on the sky line; here, right on a line with my finger. There, my lad, there. Now you've caught her.'

But he had not caught her; and the captain's utmost efforts were for some time unsuccessful in making either of the young landsmen obtain a view of the far-off vessel, which was so clearly manifest to his eyes.

'Come abaft the mast, then, and I'll put you so you can't help sighting her. There, now; look straight across the bay, as straight as an arrow.'

A tiny white speck caught Ned's eye, as, standing behind the main-mast, with his face close to it, he peered out in the direction indicated by the captain. To him and to the other boys it was but a hazy, whitish spot, which disappeared from their view each time that they took their watchful eyes from it, only to be found again after a careful search along the horizon; but the captain and sailors unhesitatingly pronounced it a large ship under full sail, promising them a very near and fine sight of her if she should prove to be the 'Petrel,' as they supposed.

A fine sight it was, when, hours later, the good ship 'Petrel,' having been watched most anxiously by at least four pairs of eyes on the schooner, passed the 'Argonaut.' The wind full in her favour, she moved swiftly toward them, a large ship, square-rigged, with every inch of canvas spread, sitting upon the heaving waters like a fair white swan upon the bosom of a lake, rising and falling to the swell of the waves with a bounding joyousness of motion which made it seem impossible that she should be a lifeless thing; even the very waves leaped up to kiss her as she glided over them in her glad beauty.

‘Cheer her! cheer her!’ shouted Jack from the rigging, where he had, until now, clung in silence, subdued by the grandeur of the magnificent sight.

The cheers were given most heartily by every voice on deck. An answering peal from the ‘Petrel’ made the air ring again, and hats and handkerchiefs were waved most enthusiastically on both sides.

‘Look! look!’ shouted Ned, almost wild with excitement. ‘We are close enough to throw something aboard. I wish we had a little flag.’

‘Or an old shoe for good luck,’ shouted Jack; and the next moment his own boot, dragged off in an instant, was sent whirling through the air and struck the deck of the ship.

Shouts of laughter and another volley of huzzas awarded the skilful throw; and a sailor snatching the boot, sprang up to the mast-head and hung the trophy there, its elevation to that post of honour being greeted by continued applause.

‘Three cheers now for the bonnie laddie i’ the riggin’, airnest and free, lads,’ cried the sailor.

Out they rang, clear and loud; and to their music the good ship sailed away from the little schooner, the sea widening between them every moment.

## V.

### MR. SPENCER'S HOME.

WHEN the 'Argonaut' touched her wharf on the afternoon of the following day, the first person to board her was Mr. Spencer. The boys had already learned from Fred Vickars that his father was closely connected in a business way with Mr. Spencer, and that his house was to be Mr. Vickars' headquarters during the next few weeks. But they found that he was by no means content with such a small party. They must all come to him. He would not listen for a moment to their plan of going down to the Point with Captain Rankin, and insisted upon it that they should make a visit in Yarmouth first, and go to the Point when they had seen all that there was to be seen in the town and the surrounding country.

As to their taking rooms at the hotel, that he would not listen to, even for a moment, laughing at the proposition as quite a preposterous idea. Finally he gained his point; and bore away his captives in triumph, much to the chagrin of the captain, who had taken a great fancy to the little party, and was quite disappointed to find that their visit to his own home was likely to be deferred, for some days at least. But his heart was comforted by most earnest assurances on the part of his young friends that their stay in the town should not be long, and a promise that in any case at least half of the

time allotted for their visit should be passed on the Point.

Bertram had for some time steadily withstood all Mr. Spencer's arguments and persuasions, fearing that his uncle and aunt might not approve of such a change of plan. But nothing that he could say weighed a pin's weight with that gentleman. Their rooms were ready; Mrs. Spencer expected them; his two little girls had been talking for days of the proposed visit; in fact, nothing would do but that they must and should accept his offered hospitality. Jack had long since gone over to the enemy; Archie saw 'no reason why we shouldn't'; and so at length Bertram had succumbed to the force of circumstances, and yielded the point.

Never was there a man of fifty and more better fitted to care for and to entertain such a party of visitors than Mr. Herbert Spencer. Quick, genial, full of life and spirit, he was at the same time firm and dignified. His tall, erect figure, the iron-grey head towering above every other in almost any group which happened to surround him, gave him an air of command which was heightened by the glance of his clear, penetrating eye, and by the deep tones of his sonorous voice. A man to be loved,—one could see that with one look into the cheerful, kindly face; but a man to be feared as well, if in that look he detected anything base or mean.

'Well, boys,' he said, as they drove rapidly towards his house, which was situated a little back of the town, at some distance from the wharf where they had landed; 'you ought to enjoy yourselves here, five of you together. I suppose that you mean to do the Provinces, as they say?'

'No, sir; we meant to stay quietly here,' said Jack, who sat beside him.

'Then you'll be the first quintette of lads that ever I saw who knew how to be quiet,' said Mr. Spencer, laughing.

'I didn't mean quiet in the mopey sense, sir. I'm afraid that if we are in Yarmouth any time, you'll find out that we don't quite understand that business. I only intended to say that we were going to remain in Yarmouth or on the Cape until we went home again.'

'Ah ! that is the difference, eh ? Well, I am not at all sure that I shall allow that. We have a very pretty country about here, although you may not think the town itself very fine, and I want you to see it. People on your side of the water, you know, seem to think that Nova Scotia is about the fag-end of creation. Now, we Nova Scotians think very differently ; and before you leave us I mean that you shall have a thorough opportunity of making up your minds as to who has the right of the question.'

'All right, sir ; we are ready for anything,' said Jack, smiling. 'We are ripe for any sort of a frolic.'

'No need to tell that, at least as far as you are personally concerned,' replied Mr. Spencer. 'Your eyes save you that trouble. How many scrapes have you been in this past year ?'

'None that I couldn't wriggle myself out of, sir,' replied Jack, looking up to meet the merry twinkle in the eyes of his questioner.

But all at once, to his surprise, the twinkle died out, and the steady eyes looked back very gravely into his own.

'I think you did not weigh your words then, my boy,' said the serious voice, now quite free from its tone of

easy badinage. 'You do not condescend to wriggle yourself out of difficulties, do you?'

'No, sir, he does not,' said Archie, quickly, leaning forward from the seat behind them, where he was wedged in between Bertram and Ned, the back seat having been yielded to Mr. and Mrs. Vickars, while Fred was stationed at Mr. Spencer's left hand, behind the horses. 'Jack is an awful chap about getting into scrapes, I must confess; but he's a grand fellow to stand up to it when he does fall into trouble. He never creeps out on a hair. I don't believe he could lie if he tried.'

The boy's plain face grew almost handsome in his enthusiasm; but the next moment he drew back into his accustomed silence, fairly startled by his own unusual vehemence. But Mr. Spencer gave him a quick, appreciative look, which set him at his ease again, as he said kindly,

'That's right, my man; stand by your brother. Don't let any one throw even a doubt at him that you can catch and crush. I did not mean, my son,' and he laid his hand on Jack's shoulder, 'to question your truth and honour; it was only that word that I disliked. Nevertheless, I am not sorry to have heard the integrity of the son of my old friend borne witness to so heartily and warmly. There is our home, and my wife is waiting for us, I see.'

It looked a home, that low-built, roomy, rambling stone house; a home in every sense; a place of warmth and comfort; a place of peace and rest, and of thorough enjoyment of all the good gifts of a heavenly Father's loving hand. And the lady standing in the doorway, with her young daughter beside her, and two tiny little



girls—twin sisters—clinging to her skirts, half delighted, half frightened by the sight of so many strange faces, looked the fitting mistress for so sweet a home. Her dark hair, already lightly touched with grey, was laid smoothly back from her high forehead beneath a delicate little cap, and her dress of black silk fell gracefully around her tall, erect figure, turned back from her throat with soft folds of white lace. Dignified and handsome as a queen, sweet and tender as a simple, loving woman, she stood there, waiting to welcome her stranger guests to a strange home in a strange land.

‘I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you here,’ she said, as, having greeted Mr. and Mrs. Vickars, she left them to the care of her daughter, and turned toward the boys. ‘I have heard so much about you from Mr. Spencer, and he has painted such pretty pictures of your home for me, that I have long wanted to see “those four boys,” as he calls you. Lily and May, here are four—no, five, brothers for you. Come and tell them how glad you are to see them.’

Black-eyed Lily, a roguish, coquettish little maiden of five years, had stood eyeing the group before her with a grave look of inquiry and investigation. When her mother spoke to her she hesitated a moment; then running forward, gave her little hand to Archie, saying soberly,

‘I’ll take this one for mine. He’s good.’

Such a shout of laughter greeted this decided expression of choice that May, who had moved forward to follow her sister’s example, shrank back abashed, and, hiding her blue eyes and golden curls in her mother’s dress, positively refused to face the enemy again. But after a while, peeping cautiously out, she caught Jack’s

eye, and, unable to resist its magnetism, crept little by little toward him, until finally she found herself, to her great astonishment, sitting on his lap and playing with his watch-chain, as much at her ease as if she had known him all her life long. So far he had carried on the whole conversation between them, the responses to his questions being given in shy nods and shakes of the golden head; but by and by the little woman, apparently feeling that she must do the polite thing, and try to entertain her guest, asked softly,

‘How does you like Brown Bessie?’

‘Who is Brown Bessie?’ asked Jack. ‘Your nurse?’

What a silvery laugh rang out, filling the room with its music.

‘No. She’s father’s pretty horse, Brown Bessie is. She isn’t my nurse,’ said May, looking up with twinkling eyes. ‘Little girls has womens for nurses, not horses.’

‘Heyday! what is all this about?’ asked Mr. Spencer, as the merry laugh, joined in very heartily by Jack, pealed out once more. ‘You are having your own fun over here, I see.’

‘This is a very ‘markable boy, father,’ said May, looking up into his face. ‘He finked Brown Bessie was my nurse.’

‘And did you tell him who she was?’ asked Mr. Spencer. ‘Did you tell him that she was the prettiest and the fastest little horse in all Nova Scotia? Perhaps you noticed her,’ he added, turning to Jack. ‘I drove her with a white horse this afternoon.’

‘Yes, sir; I saw that she was a beauty. The white horse matches her very well in size, and in pace too.’

‘For ordinary driving, yes. But Bessie would outrun him in the first quarter of a mile if they were trotted

against one another. She is quite the pride of my heart, that little horse. She has not a fault that I have yet found out, and I have owned her for two years.'

'Father won't let anybody drive her but just herself,' put in May, who thought the conversation was growing too select.

The information shot a thrill of disappointment down through Jack's heart, for he had, while riding up from the wharf, already begun to promise himself the delight of sitting behind pretty Bessie, holding the reins in his own hands.

'No,' said Mr. Spencer, in a tone of corroboration which sent down another thrill; 'Bessie is my own peculiar property. The other horses I do not care so much about; but I would rather lose twice her value in money than to have any harm come to Bessie.'

'There's Félice, father. Tea is ready,' suggested May again; and, slipping down from Jack's knee, she took his hand to lead him into the next room.

'Lily has taken your brother prisoner too, I see,' said Mr. Spencer, rising to obey the summons of the servant. 'Well, Lily, what are you going to do with that new brother?'

Lily looked up at her father with a broad smile of delight, and then made a rush at May, dragging her willing captive by the hand.

'Is this boy nice?' she asked in an eager whisper. 'Mine is.'

'Yes,' replied May in the same tone. 'I like him. He tells me funny stories, and he laughs in his eyes. Does yours?'

'No-o, not much,' said Lily, reflectively. 'But he

looks as if he could love real hard ; and he gives me big hugs, and don't say anything. I'm sure he's the bestest of all.'

'He can't be bester of mine,' said May, shaking her head energetically. 'There isn't any bester of him, I know.'

Lily looked very doubtfully at the amused face, which pretended not to have heard the discussion ; but before she had time to throw down the gauntlet again they had reached the dining-room, and her father had separated both her and her little sister from their new friends, placing them beside himself, while Mrs. Spencer gave the two boys seats at her own right and left hand, at the farther end of the table, much to the chagrin of their little sweethearts.

'I very much wish, Mr. Vickars,' said Mr. Spencer, when they were all comfortably seated around the supper table, 'that I could persuade you to put off your visit to Halifax for a week. I should enjoy showing you our part of the county before you go across ; and it is not unlikely that I may need to go over myself within a fortnight. If you could defer your visit there for a few days, and would like to take the journey overland, we might have a very pleasant ride together.'

'I cannot wait, I am sorry to say,' replied Mr. Vickars. 'My business in Halifax requires my presence there as early as possible. We must leave by the steamer to-morrow.'

'Then let us at least keep your wife and son with us,' said Mrs. Spencer. 'Mrs. Vickars looks as if she needed rest. Let them both remain with us until you return.'

'That is as they think best, madam. Fred would

doubtless be glad to accept your kind offer, for he seems to have taken a great fancy to these young people ; but as for my wife, I rather think that, in spite of her inclination to sea-sickness, she will go to Halifax with me. She would not like the journey overland ; and as I may be detained for some time, she would prefer to go with me. I am right, I suppose, Mary ?' turning to his wife.

Mrs. Vickars assented ; and so it was agreed that Fred should remain in Yarmouth while his father and mother made their visit to Halifax, an arrangement which suited the young gentleman excellently well.

'I tell you we'll have a royal time here,' he said to Jack as they went up to their room together that evening. 'We can do pretty much as we like with our— with father and mother both out of the way.'

He had been about to say, 'with our fathers and mothers out of the way ;' but suddenly recollecting that these new friends of his regarded their parents in quite a different light from that in which he looked upon his own, he changed the wording of his remark slightly, afraid of catching in Jack's eye the same expression with which Archie had once regarded him. But careless Jack thought of nothing but the promised good time, to which he also was looking forward with great anticipations, and soon lay fast asleep in the large room which he and Archie shared with Fred (Bertram and Ned occupying the room adjoining it), with all sorts of delightful visions wandering at their will through his expectant brain.

'I shall put you off here in the back building,' Mrs. Spencer had said as she led them up to their rooms, 'for I know how boys like to romp and frolic ; and you can

make all the noise you like here without being afraid of disturbing any one.'

They were too thoroughly tired, however, to run the risk of interfering with any one's rest that night, wherever they might have been placed, and were soon safely out of the reach of temptation in the realms of dream-land.

## VI.

### FRENCH PAUL.

‘BERT, get up and come here,’ said Ned the next morning, giving Bertram’s arm a vigorous shake. ‘It is time you were up; and besides, I want to show you the queerest looking lot of people you ever saw.’

Ned had been up for a half-hour or more, and was standing half-dressed at the bedside when Bertram opened his eyes in response to his call.

‘What! up already, Samson? Why, how well you look, old chap!’ You’ve got up quite a colour. This thing is going to do first-rate for you, Ned;’ and Bertram sat up in bed, and gazed at his brother with eyes which would have answered for those of a young mother, they were so full of satisfied delight.

‘Yes, I’m all right now. But don’t stare at a fellow like that, old granny; get up, and come see these people.’

Bertram was out of bed with a bound, only pausing to fling his pillows through the open doorway which connected his room with the larger apartment, as a means of wakening the other boys. Being a good marksman, the pillows effected his purpose by striking the sleepers full in their faces, and the next instant were sent whirling through the doorway again, with a force which proved that the occupants of both beds had been roused to a very full sense of the realities of their position.

‘Get up, you fellows, and see how they manage affairs in this part of the world,’ said Bertram. ‘I’d like to

poke those chaps up with a sharp stick. Just look at them !'

The 'chaps' who had so aroused his indignation were a party of half a dozen foreign-looking men, dressed in shirts and trousers of dark-blue flannel, who stood idly leaning against a fence on the further side of the road behind the house, smoking their clay pipes, and indolently watching the movements of as many women, who were busily raking and tossing the hay which lay in the field on the other side of the fence. The women, dressed in long, scantily-made gowns of blue cotton cloth, with a three-cornered handkerchief of black silk thrown over their heads and loosely knotted beneath the chin in lieu of a hat, moved gracefully to and fro at their work, chatting now and then with their lazy husbands and brothers, apparently quite satisfied with the state of affairs.

'I wonder who these people are,' said Archie. 'They look like foreigners.'

'I suppose they are the French people from the back country,' said Fred. 'I heard Mr. Spencer telling father last night that there were a great many of them here. That woman that waited on the table last night was one of them. Didn't you notice that they spoke French to her ?'

'Yes,' said Jack ; 'but she doesn't look like these people. You might imagine yourself on the other side of the water to see such a sight as this,—women at work in a hay-field, while the men look on. Holloa, you fellows !' and in a moment the window was thrown wide open, and Jack was leaning (only half dressed) far out of the casement. 'Holloa, there ! Why don't you go to work, instead of letting your women wear themselves out ?'



The group of smokers raised their dull, heavy faces toward the window from whence the ring of the indignant young voice had sounded, with an uncomprehending stare.

‘Go to work,’ shouted Jack.

The men looked at one another, then at the group in the window, then at one another again, with perplexed and somewhat distressed faces. Finally, after a short consultation between them, one of the party crossed the road with a slow step, his pipe still in his mouth, and his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his trousers. Climbing the intervening fence with an amount of deliberation and caution which won shouts of merriment from his observers, he traversed the path leading up toward the house, and, coming close beneath the window, looked up interrogatively, but uttered no sound.

‘Why don’t you go to work?’ said Jack, leaning down toward the upturned, questioning face. ‘I should think you would be ashamed of yourselves, you great, strapping chaps, standing still and letting those women work away there all alone! Isn’t there one whole man in that crowd?’

His hearer still stood staring up at him with a stupefied face, and, when he had concluded his tirade, said wonderingly,

‘Eh, monsieur?’

‘Speak French to him, Jack. He can’t understand English,’ said Bertram as soon as he could speak, for he was almost convulsed with laughter.

But although Jack was a fair French scholar, he succeeded no better in making himself understood in that language than in his own.

‘Travaillez, travaillez! Go to work! toss the hay!’

he shouted at last, out of all patience, mimicking the motion of the haymakers to enforce his words; and finally he was understood.

With a laugh the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

'Oh! c'est ça? Nos femmes, elles feront tout cela,' he said, and, turning on his heel, walked slowly back to his comrades.

The women, who had been standing, rake in hand, watching this incomprehensible proceeding, with their swarthy faces lifted to the window where their enraged champion stood waging battle in their behalf, their bright, dark eyes full of half-apprehensive wonder, gathered instantly around their countryman to hear his explanation of the strange encounter, and, to Jack's infinite disgust, received his story with peals of laughter. In fact, the entire company seemed intensely amused by the little occurrence; and, during the whole time occupied in preparing themselves for breakfast, the boys were constantly saluted by fresh bursts of merriment, the women being evidently quite as much amused as the men by the strange view of affairs taken by their young defenders.

'What brought French Paul over here this morning, Anna?' asked Mr. Spencer, at the breakfast table. 'Has he concluded at last to try to earn his own bread?'

'Not that I know of,' replied Mrs. Spencer. 'I have not heard of his being here.'

'I saw him crossing the back garden, a while before breakfast, looking very smiling and happy. His wife and half a dozen other women are making hay in the north field, and he, with a whole troop of drones like him, are lounging about there watching them. When I saw him crossing the garden, I had some hope that the

lecture I gave him last week on laziness had had some effect, and that he had come to ask for work. You have never seen any of these Acadian French, I suppose,' he added, turning to Bertram, who sat near him.

'We saw those people at work in the field this morning,' replied Bertram, looking up with eyes dancing with fun. 'Jack had a little encounter with the gentleman who came over into the garden.'

'You had?' said Mr. Spencer, glancing with an amused smile toward Jack. 'How came that about?'

'Just in this way, sir; that I tried to persuade those fellows to go to work, instead of standing watching the women. Why, I never saw such a set! The lazy rascals! Is that the way they do about here, sir?'

'It is the way they always have done, but they are improving somewhat now. These French are a very peculiar people. Although they live here right in our midst, they are as distinct and separate from the British Americans as if they were divided from them by the wide ocean. Their houses and their whole manner of life are peculiar to themselves, as you may judge simply by what you have seen this morning. Their language is a sort of French dialect, interlarded with some few English words, and almost unintelligible, except to those who are well accustomed to hearing it. Many old French men and women who have passed their whole lives here are unable to understand a single sentence spoken in English.'

'And do the women support all the men?' asked Jack, whose indignant feelings had not yet by any means subsided.

'No, not now. Until within a year they have done almost all the work that has been undertaken by them

as a people ; but that was very little. They come into town during the haying season, and earn a small amount by making hay, and that comprises about the whole labour of the season. Later they gather blueberries, and bring them in in enormous quantities for sale, walking sometimes a distance of twelve or fourteen miles into town in the morning, and back again at night. How they subsist in the winter I do not know, for they seldom work, and almost never beg. Once in a while you see a Frenchman who takes sturdily to work like one of ourselves ; and some of the younger women are beginning to take places as servants in our families. Our own servants, both men and women, are all French. I hope that, as time goes on, the spirit of independence, which is the glory of this Continent, will infuse itself into the souls of this people, and lift them above the poor, unworthy life with which they are now content.'

'I should like to see their homes,' said Fred Vickars. 'They must be curious-looking places.'

'In many cases they are scarcely more than shanties. The village of Lisonne, some few miles from here, the home of our French Paul with whom you had the argument this morning, is a collection of small buildings, built for the most part of unpainted boards, with one room on the ground-floor, which serves as parlour, kitchen, bedroom, and, I had almost said, stable as well, for ducks, pigs, chickens, and all, come in and out of the open doorway at their own sweet will. Above this one room there is generally a space under the eaves, into which such of the family as cannot crowd into the main apartment overflow at night, reaching it by means of a ladder made of the trunks of two young trees, with rude slats nailed across for rungs.

‘But some of these days we will drive over to Mérimon. That is a French village of an entirely different stamp—neat and pretty as any New England town, and as thrifty too. Its little white cottages, covered with vines and creepers, and surrounded by gay gardens, are a comfort to one’s soul after driving through desolate Lisonne and its sister settlements; and the neat attire of its women, who dress much in the style of our own people, with just a touch of French dash and coquetry to give an added charm to their costume, is a real refreshment to the eye. You can tell a Mérimon French man or woman anywhere by their well-to-do, comfortable appearance, and a certain little air of dignified self-respect which you never see in such men as lazy Paul and his compeers. Now, Josie, breakfast being over, what do you propose to do this morning?’

‘I had thought of suggesting a ride to the Cream-pot,’ said Josie, ‘if these young gentlemen are all horsemen. If not, we might drive over in the large carriage.’

‘I had rather you should put off that expedition until another day, for I want to let them see our gold mines at work, and the crusher will not be in use to-day. We can go to the Cream-pot and the mine at the same time. Suppose that you ride over to Fraser’s Farm to-day. The good lady will be delighted to welcome you, and it will be an amusement to the boys to see her and the farm.’

‘Oh, yes! that would be a frolic. Do you all ride?’ and Josie’s quick glance took in the whole party as she asked the question.

The boys assented, all having been accustomed to the use of horses since they were very young; and it was determined to start off at once, when—alas! down came

the fog, grey, thick, and wet, with no sort of sympathy with or pity for the disappointed young people, who, with the exception of Josie, stood watching it as it descended, spreading its grey folds over the whole landscape, with astonishment written on every line of their rueful faces.

'Why, it was clear, bright sunshine only a few moments ago,' said Ned at length. 'I never saw anything so strange.'

'And it may be clear, bright sunshine in ten minutes again,' replied Josie. 'Well, we must just wait for it. Perhaps we can amuse ourselves here for the morning, and the fog may take pity on us and leave us a fair afternoon. By the way, father, we shall need a couple of horses from Langman's,—unless you will let me ride Brown Bessie,' she added, glancing up mischievously at Mr. Spencer.

'No, little woman, that I cannot do,' he said. 'You are as good a horsewoman as I ever saw, but I cannot trust you on Brown Bess. It takes the full power of a strong man's hand to hold that creature in when she feels inclined to do her best. You had better ride your own Kitty, and I will send over to Langman's for good horses for two of the boys; the rest we can supply from our own stable. Now, Mr. Vickars and I are going off by ourselves, for we have a great deal of business to attend to; and I shall leave you all to Josie's tender mercies, for I see that Mrs. Vickars and mother have already escaped. I am in hopes that we may have a beautiful afternoon yet.'

'Let's tell 'nundrums,' said Lily, who had been holding fast by Archie's hand during all this chat with regard to the proposed expedition. 'Don't you like 'nundrums?'

'Yes, very much,' replied Archie, sitting down, and lifting his admirer to his knee.

'Can you tell answers to 'em?' asked Lily.

'Sometimes. You give me one and let me try.'

'Well, let's think;' and Lily rested a dimpled cheek on her chubby hand, and sat lost in thought for some moments. By and by she lifted her face, and, looking gravely at Archie, said,

'If there was a dog what had his tail cut off, how many eyes would be left in his head?'

Archie looked back at his questioner with quite as grave a face as that with which she regarded him, in spite of the smiles and the subdued laughter he saw and heard all around him; no one, however, presuming to laugh out, as Josie had warned them that Lily's feelings on the subject of 'nundrums' were easily wounded.

'How many eyes would he have left?' asked Archie, reflectively. 'Let me see—two?'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lily, in high dudgeon, 'you must have knowed it before, you answered so quick;' and as the laughter, which had been with difficulty restrained to this crisis, broke bounds, filling the room with its happy music, she sprang down from her perch, and rushed indignantly from the merry-makers.

'Lily's proposal is a good one,' said Josie, as soon as she could speak. 'Suppose we while away this grey morning in "nundrums" and tricks. I am sure that you boys must know any amount of sleight-of-hand tricks. Don't you?'

Each knew of something of the kind. What boys do not? And all being willing to do their best toward making the rest forget their disappointment, the hours flew rapidly by. Outraged Lily returned after a time to

the scene of her trials, and, finding Jack engaged in cutting the profiles of the company, sat demurely down to have the picture of her own little phiz taken. Teasing Jack, hoping to excite her baby indignation again, cut a turned-up nasal organ, with a hump upon the bridge, to represent the perfect little Grecian nose which the tiny maiden really owned ; but he failed utterly in his object. Lily took the poor picture, and, gazing at it with a face of unfeigned delight, ran with it to Josie, saying eagerly,

‘ Oh, Josie ! see this dear little wart on my nose ! I didn’t know I had such a ‘tunnin’ little wart of my own. I’m going to run and show mother ;’ and she was off with her treasure before her hearers understood the true state of the case, and so was spared the hearing of a second burst of merriment at her expense.



## VII.

### MRS. FRASER'S FARM.

'YOU'LL have a beautiful afternoon for your ride, after all, Josie,' said Mr. Spencer, coming into the library, where his daughter had established herself with her friends. 'The wind has changed, and the fog is clearing away already.'

The announcement was hailed with delight; and when, a little later, the sun broke out in full splendour, scattering the last dim remnant of the wet mist before him, the acclamations which greeted his appearance proved beyond a doubt that, good-humouredly as the first disappointment had been borne, a second would have been almost too much for human, or at least boyish, endurance.

It was a very happy and a very noisy party which stood around the doorway and out upon the piazza, as soon as the early dinner had been discussed, waiting until the horses should be brought up; and a pretty picture they made, when, a few moments later, all well mounted, they trotted briskly down the road toward the gate, each face a mirror of pleasurable excitement and full enjoyment.

'Take care of my pale-faced boy, Bertram, and bring him back to me with more colour in his cheeks,' called Mrs. Spencer.

Bertram was almost out of hearing, but he turned in the saddle and bowed his answer with such a smile upon

his face that Mrs. Spencer said to her husband, as they went together into the house,

'I believe that if you want to make Bertram Morton perfectly happy, you have only to say a word of kindness to Ned. His affection for the boy is more like a mother's love than like that of an elder brother.'

'How far from here is this farm to which we are going?' asked Bertram, as the whole party drew rein after a smart gallop over a level piece of road.

'About ten miles from here. They say that it is just twelve miles from our gate to Mrs. Fraser's,' said Josie, by whose side Bertram was riding. 'By the way, the lady is a countrywoman of yours,—a Yankee of the strongest possible stamp in appearance, voice, manner, everything, in short. But as true and good a woman,' added Josie, with a sudden touch of feeling in her voice, 'as you ever saw or knew. Did I tell you about her this morning?'

'No. Has she a story?' asked Bertram, whose interest was roused by Josie's manner.

'A very simple one—such an one as I suppose many another woman could tell; but I think there are but few of the many who would illustrate their story with such pictures as those with which Mrs. Fraser illuminates hers. She is a woman of about forty, I presume, with a paralytic husband and an idiot son, both of whom she supports by farming. And when I say farming, I mean it. She works in the field, superintends the labour of her two farm hands, and controls the whole machinery just as if she were a man; while in the house, with her sick husband and her silly boy, she is as gentle and tender a woman as if a sick-room were her vocation. Full of force and life and energy, you would think it

next to impossible for her to bear with all the foolish fancies and notions of a fretful, fractious invalid ; but she is as rich in sympathy and kindness as she is in vigour and strength. Dear old Prissy ! I believe I am really fond of her.'

'Do you often go out to see her?'

'No, not very often. Father and I generally ride out once or twice during the summer. She is very fond of father, and of me for his sake. He once had it in his power to do her a great service, and she has never forgotten it. I like to go ; I like to see her farm. And then she is so funny, that a visit to her is very amusing. She scarcely ever sees any one but the plain people who live around her, and my appearance in the matter of attire, the arrangement of my hair, and so forth, is of the greatest possible interest to her. I think she has been very fond of dress in her day, for she is certainly very much interested in it now. You may expect to hear my appearance commented on down to the merest details ; and if you boys escape examination I shall be surprised.'

'I hope that she does not object to boys,' said Bert-ram, with a glance back toward the rest of the company.

'Indeed, she does not. She never objects to any number of visitors, and always entreats us to bring over any one who may be staying with us. Wait until you hear your welcome ; I think you will feel assured that we are not even one too many.

A little more than an hour brought them to the brow of a hill, from which Josie pointed out the farm, lying at its foot, a very picture of plenty and comfort and thrift.

'Doesn't that do pretty well for a woman ?' said Josie, looking as proud and as much pleased as if the farm were her own, and all the expressions of praise which

were uttered by the party gathered round her were given to her own handiwork. 'And there is Mrs. Fraser,' she added, as they rode down the hill. 'Do you see that tall figure in the potato-field? There! away to the right.'

'Oh, yes, I see her,' said Jack. 'Just look at the way she uses that spade! She ought to be a French woman, with half a dozen men to support.'

'Not she,' said Josie, with a laugh; 'that is, if they could support themselves. You may be sure that her men are busy enough, or she would be down upon them like a whirlwind. I wonder if I can make her see me.'

'Wave your handkerchief,' suggested Jack, as Josie in vain shook her riding-whip and called to the busy woman, who stood tossing and turning the heavy earth with the ease and strength of a man.

The white cambric floating out on the air caught her eye as she lifted her head for a moment. She paused in her work, and, shading her eyes with her hand, looked out to the road. In another instant she had flung down the spade, and was striding with long, strong steps across the field towards the house, motioning to Josie to meet her there.

'Well, well, well,' she said, as soon as she was within hearing. 'Just to see such a sight! I'm just frustrated to see you all, and a horsebackin', too. My! don't you look nice! Who are you all, Miss Josie? If I ain't glad to see you! all over loam and potatoes, too, and not a hand fit to shake, but just as welcome as my heart's desire. Do come in and rest you while I clean up and get you a bit of cake. And how's mother, dear, and father, and the blessed twins!'

What if her feet were cased in heavy leather boots,

shown off to the best advantage by the dress of dark calico, which fell far short of her ankles ! What if her hands were coarse and hard ! What if every feature of her face were bronzed and weather-beaten ! There was a great, deep, tender soul in that woman. They saw it looking out upon them through her large grey eyes ; they heard it speaking to them in the rich tones of her clear voice,—loud, manly almost, yet with a sweet ring in them too ; and frolicsome, thoughtless boys though they were, they saw the beautiful heart shining through the rough casing, and every hat in the little crowd was lifted with all the courtesy and deference which they would have shown to Mrs. Spencer herself.

‘My ! but this is a real treat now,’ she went on. ‘I’m going to whistle for John to take the horses to the stable ; but I do want Willie to see you just as you stand, you do look so nice. Willie, Willie ! mother wants you, sonny.’

In answer to her call, the door of the house before which they stood was slowly opened, and a boy of about fourteen or fifteen years of age stood in the doorway,—a loose, shambling figure, with a face whose only expression was one of stupid wonderment.

‘Come here, Willie, and see Miss Josie and all these young gentlemen on their nice horses,’ said Mrs. Fraser, holding out her hand to him coaxingly, as if he were a very little child ; ‘come, dear.’

He came shuffling down the pathway toward her with open mouth and staring eyes, the very impersonation of imbecility. But his mother looked at him with a face all radiant with love, and, drawing him to her, stroked back the sandy locks from his low forehead with her large hand as softly and gently as if he had been a baby,

'He's so pleased,' she said to Josie, as the poor idiot stood staring with his blank, meaningless face at the horses and their riders. 'See how bright he looks!'

'He don't often see so many together, I suppose,' said Josie, rather posed for a reply, for anything less bright than the dull face before her she had never seen.

'No, he don't; and he's so fond of horses, too. Now run in, Willie, boy, and tell father there's company coming. It'll do him good and cheer him up to see you all. Run, Willie, and I'll whistle for John to take the horses.'

Putting her fingers to her lips, she blew a sharp, shrill whistle; and by the time that the party were fairly dismounted and ready to accompany her into the house, the man whom she had summoned was on the spot.

'Perhaps you'd rather go over the farm a little first,' said Mrs. Fraser, pausing on her way to the door. 'Miss Josie always does, I know, and perhaps you'd all like to stretch your legs a bit. I don't know, though, as you care for it with those long skirts on, Miss Josie. Can you make out to tuck yourself up comfortable if I give you a bunch of pins?'

'Oh, I am provided against that difficulty, Mrs. Fraser,' said Josie. 'If you will wait two minutes for me, I shall be all ready.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Fraser, as in less than the specified time Josie announced herself prepared for action, 'you are just the 'cutest one for loopin' and bobbin' up that ever I did see. Why, you look as if you'd stepped right out of a fashion-plate out of Godey's, only you ain't got no hoops. But that don't make any odds, they say, in these days; and as to me, what could I do with 'em in the field? What's the stuff, dear? It's beautiful, and

expensive too, I'm sure ; so rich and soft, and very becoming with the blue.'

'It is broadcloth,' replied Josie sedately, presuming, from her questioner's touch upon her sleeve, that 'the stuff' under consideration was the material of her habit.

'So soft and nice, ain't it ? A good winter cloak it would make me, too, thick wadded and lined. Might I ask you how much a yard, Miss Josie ?'

Josie gave the desired information, and then, by a well directed question, tried to turn the tide of conversation, but all to no purpose. One would have thought the hard-working, masculine-looking woman a light-headed, silly little butterfly of fashion, simply to see her interest and delight all the small details of her visitor's dress.

'Does Willie talk any more, did you say ? Oh, yes. He understands anything that's said to him slowly and kindly, and he'll answer if he don't get frightened. But he does be frightened so very easy ; that's his great trouble. This isn't silk exactly, is it,—this little tie at your throat ? Such a pretty 'blue, too, and looks so bright against the black dress. What might the name of it be. And I was noticing what a fit your gloves was. You always wear fine gloves, don't you ? and so becoming it is ; don't you think so, sir ?'

Archie was walking at Josie's right hand, Mrs. Fraser having taken her place on the left, and the final question was addressed to him. The rest of the party were keeping carefully in the background, for the effort of maintaining their gravity was becoming a very serious affair ; and they considered sober Archie the ablest member of the company in that respect.

'Did you allude to the gloves, ma'am ?' asked Archie,

so gravely that poor Josie had well-nigh disgraced herself and wounded the feelings of her hostess.

'Oh, dear, no; to this little blue thing at her throat; dainty, isn't it, and pretty? I'm growing rather brown for blue, but I looked well in it as a girl. How do you think it would do, now, with a black dress? I've a nice alpaca of a good black, very nice shade, and I might get Miss Josie to buy one for me like hers down to the town;' and Mrs. Fraser's eyes lighted with anticipation as she looked eagerly at Archie for his answer.

'I should think you would look very well indeed in it,' he replied, with unmoved gravity, while poor Josie's mouth twitched and quivered in spite of her utmost efforts. 'If Miss Josie will attend to the purchase for you, I will ride out with it some day; it will give me great pleasure.'

Josie was free, and Archie's fortune was as good as made, if its making depended on Mrs. Fraser's good-will and esteem.

'Such a sensible, pleasant young fellow,' she said to her husband half a dozen times over that night. 'And with such a manly, common-sense idea of the fitness of things. I just wish that Miss Josie were a few years younger; for who knows but what if she were his age instead of twenty or twenty-one, and if he should make up to her, and if she should like him, and they should hitch together, but perhaps he'd leave his home in the States and come and settle down near us here. How nice that would be; wouldn't it, Joseph? I wonder would he buy that farm of Curtis's. He might, for it's a wonderful nice bit of land.'

But for the present she restrained her comments upon her new friend, and devoted herself to his enlightenment



on farm matters ; for Archie, fearing that his own wardrobe might be the next point of discussion, pressed her so closely on the subject of potatoes, hay, drainage, etc., that Mrs. Fraser's whole soul was soon engrossed in those and kindred topics ; for, like all good farmers, her farm was her hobby.

Archie learned many lessons in the hours of that bright afternoon ; but the lessons were not all upon crops, the redemption of waste lands, growing of fruit, etc. He learned much on all these points from his eager, intelligent instructress ; but the strong, brave woman taught him other lessons as well. Archie was not a Christian ; he was not even what we sometimes term a serious boy ; but the sterling sense, the indomitable perseverance, and the grand courage of this woman won his admiration and respect ; and when, in her quaint, original way, she went on from talking of her crops to speak of the field in our own hearts, which we must as servants of the Owner of the soil redeem from its present loss and waste, bringing in the fruit with glad thanksgiving to the Lord of the vineyard, he listened to her with interest and attention.

But when with her earnest manner, as naturally as a child might have done, she spoke of her own life, her beautiful, unquestioning faith in Him who in His inscrutable wisdom had placed her, an unprotected, lonely woman, in this strange position, surrounding her with all the duties and responsibilities of a strong man, while they who should have been her natural protectors and supporters were only useless weights upon her overburdened hands, Archie's very heart was touched. Little did the plain woman beside him think, as she talked so quietly and trustfully of all that God had done for her,

and of all that she expected Him yet to do, that she was carrying on a work in the heart of the boy whose eyes were fixed so gravely on her homely, pleasant face, which no learned sermon he had ever heard, nor even the loving lessons of his mother's lips, had yet done for him.

Unshaken trust and faith in the love of a God, who, as it seemed to him, had shut out all brightness and beauty from the life of His child, was to Archie Sheldon an entirely different thing from the same faith and trust yielded by a heart whose cup of happiness was filled to overflowing; and his thoughtful mind was very busy on the question, whether any heart—no, it came nearer than that, whether his own heart—would not be the happier for this confidence in God's unfailing love, when, to his surprise, he found himself back again at the farmhouse.

## VIII.

### THE STORM.

'Now come in and talk to father a while,' said Mrs. Fraser, as the rest of the little party reached the doorstep, 'and I'll see to get you a bite of something. Why, see here! Look what a gust we're going to have. That must have come up very sudden.'

Even as she spoke the sunlight was shadowed, and all looked up in surprise to see a dark cloud rising rapidly from the westward.

'We had better not go in, Mrs. Fraser,' said Josie, with rather an anxious glance at the sky. 'I think that we must start for home at once.'

'Indeed, and you must not do anything of the kind,' replied her hostess. 'It's nothing but a blow, and it will be all over before you're through with your tea. If you start off now, you'll just be caught in it. I won't let you stir the first step. See how fast it's coming! Why, child, you'd be blown all to pieces in less than no time!'

The cloud was certainly sweeping up with amazing swiftness, and the boys all agreeing in Mrs. Fraser's opinion, that they could not possibly reach home before the storm broke, Josie submitted to the hand which had for some minutes been steadily drawing her toward the doorway, and went in.

'See here, Joseph, what a party we've got to-day of young folks! Why, we'll be as chirpy as a lot of crickets

on a hearthstone. Look up, man, and speak to Miss Josie.'

Josie went forward to the chair in which the invalid lay propped up with pillows.

'How are you to-day, Mr. Fraser?' she asked, in her bright, cheery voice; 'you look rather better than when I saw you last.'

'Well, I'm complainin', Miss, always complainin',' said the man, in a thin, piping tone; 'sometimes better and sometimes worse, but always complainin'.'

'And I tell him he hadn't oughter be, Miss Josie. It's very bad to be tied fast, hand and foot, no doubt; but then we have blessings which many another would be glad enough of, and we'd oughter open our eyes to 'em, and take 'em kind and considerate like. "What would we do now, Joseph," says I, "if the crops should all fail, and I should take sick?" But no; no such thing comes to us. The good Lord keeps us in health and plenty, while others is sick and poor.'

'Prissy don't know,' said the sick man fretfully, as his wife, who had called out her little sermon in vigorous tones from the next room, ceased speaking. 'She don't have trials.'

'Not just the same kind of trials that you have, Mr. Fraser,' said Josie; 'but she has her own share, I think. The fact is, that she bears them so bravely that no one knows how deeply she feels them. Oh, see how the dust is whirling through the air!'

In another moment the whole atmosphere was thick with dust and flying particles; the trees and shrubs around the house were bending helplessly before the tempest, swaying this way and that as the fierce wind dashed them to and fro in its fury, and then beat them

down mercilessly to the earth. The blast whistled and moaned around the farmhouse, and the darkness grew and deepened with every moment, until it seemed almost as if night had actually settled down upon them.

Every one was awed into silence, until, in the midst of the stillness which reigned through the room, Mrs. Fraser suddenly ran in, and, glancing hurriedly around, moved quickly toward a certain corner, where, unnoticed by any one, poor Willie lay crouched in terror.

'Prissy, Prissy,' called her husband, as soon as he saw her, 'come and help me up ; I'm cramped, sitting so long.'

'Wait a minute, Joseph ; Willie's frightened of the wind. Willie, dear, don't do so ; don't. Nothin's goin' to hurt you. Don't, Willie, dear, mother's own boy.'

He was clinging about her neck, his face hidden in her breast, as pitiable a picture of abject fear as one could imagine.

'Come, Prissy, come ; you're making a fool of that strapping boy.'

She tried to unclasp the poor idiot's hands, but he only clung the closer to her neck.

'Can I help you up ?' asked Bertram, bending over the sick man's chair.

'No, no, thank you ; Prissy is the only one who does it just right. Prissy, Prissy, you must come. The boy must get used to the wind some time.'

Bertram turned to see if he could do anything for the perplexed woman by relieving her of the other claimant upon her care ; but Jack was beforehand with him.

'It is always so when the wind blows hard,' said Mrs. Fraser, as Jack laid his hand coaxingly on Willie's shoulder, trying to draw him from her. 'Ever since he

was a baby he has done just so every time there was a gale, and it always angers Joseph. Yes, Joseph, yes,' as the thin, querulous voice still continued its incessant call. 'Willie, dear, let mother go ; the young gentleman is close beside you here.'

With gentle force Jack took the tightly clasped hands in his, and, drawing them back from Mrs. Fraser's neck, held them in his own, talking quietly the while, as he would have done to calm a very little child. By and by the shaking hands grew still in his firm hold, and the tremulous face, quivering in every feature, looked up into his, a dim ray of intelligence and interest lighting the dull blue eyes.

Jack's easy talk had woven itself into a story of a boy who had been separated from his mother. A wide sea lay between them, and the ship on which the boy had embarked, hoping soon to be carried to his mother, lay becalmed ; there was not a breath of air to waft it over the seas. By and by a kindly breeze took pity on the sorrowful boy ; the ship began to stir and sway a little ; the breeze freshened into a strong wind ; the sails filled, and the gallant ship stood out to sea. Keener and stronger grew the wind, and the boy's heart leaped and danced for joy, for the gale was wafting him every moment nearer to his mother. At last the farther shore was reached ; his mother was waiting for him ; and he ran to her and laid his head upon her breast, and told her of the good, kind wind which had brought him across the sea.

A very simple story, very simply told ; for the poor, weak mind which Jack was trying to feed could only take the very simplest food. But the kind act had been so well and wisely done, that when the little story was

concluded, the frightened boy, quite calm and composed now, nodded toward the window with a half smile on his face, saying stammeringly,

‘Going—now—boy home.’

‘Oh yes,’ said Jack, catching his meaning instantly. ‘The wind is going down ; its work is all done. You won’t be frightened at the good wind again, will you ?’

‘No—no,’ said Willie, hesitatingly. ‘But—but don’t like—good wind.’

‘Well,’ said Fred Vickars, leaving his seat by the window, where he had been watching the storm, and coming up to Jack’s side as he concluded his story, ‘I should think you’d come out in a new character. We shall have a revised edition of Mother Goose yet from the pen of John Raymond Sheldon, Esq. What a miserable fool this creature is !’

‘Don’t, Fred ; you don’t know but that he may understand you,’ said Jack, already feeling half ashamed, however, of his good deed. ‘I had to do something, you know, the poor woman was in such a fix.’

‘I’d have let him shake to pieces before I’d have bothered myself with him,’ said Fred. ‘He hasn’t the sense of a cat.’

Willie did not comprehend the rapidly spoken words, uttered as they were in an undertone, but he understood the contemptuous expression of Fred’s face ; and, knowing enough to feel that the sharp words were in some way connected with himself, he shrank back from the new-comer, holding tightly by Jack’s hand, but hiding his face behind his shoulder.

‘Move away, Fred ; you’re frightening the fellow, and I don’t want to have my work to do over again,’ said

Jack, half vexed, and half touched by Willie's silent appeal to him.

As Fred turned away with a sneer on his face, which Jack did not see, Mrs. Fraser came up just in time to catch the disagreeable look, and just in time, too, to see her son clinging to Jack.

'All right now, Willie, boy?' she asked, cheerfully. 'See, the sun is coming out again. Run along, sonny, and bring in some wood for mother.'

As the shambling figure moved slowly away to do her bidding, looking so utterly imbecile that it seemed impossible that he should have understood her command, she laid her hand upon the shoulder of the handsome, bright-eyed young fellow, who had risen to his feet, and now stood facing her, saying, in a low voice, strangely in contrast with her usual loud tones,

'He may sneer, my lad, but the Lord above us is lookin' down on you with a beautiful smile.'

'Mrs. Fraser,' said Josie, as their hostess passed out of the room remarking that tea would be ready in a moment, 'I think that we had better not wait for tea. It is six o'clock now, and we will be so late in reaching home.'

'Not stay for tea!' exclaimed Mrs. Fraser. 'Listen to the child! Ride twelve miles, and go back without your supper! Not a bit of it, my dear. There'll be a beautiful moon, and, with all these young gentlemen to look after you, you'd be safe if there wasn't; and me with my hot biscuits all ready, and honey and all, the very things you like best—and black fruit cake, and made by my own bees, too; you'll not go without it—and father and Willie not caring for it either, and nobody to eat but myself.'



The entreating, distressed expression of Mrs. Fraser's face was irresistible, even if her words had been less urgent; and Josie yielded once more, recollecting that, as the good woman had said, there would be a fine moon to light them on their homeward way.

'Where is Willie?' asked Archie, as a few moments later they all gathered round the table, on which Mrs. Fraser had spread a repast amply sufficient for four times their number. 'Where is he to sit? we have filled all the places.'

'Oh, he'll just wait a while,' said Mrs. Fraser. 'Mostly always when I've company I let him wait, for he isn't quite so nice at table as he will be one of these days. He don't mind,—at least, not much,' she added, with a sudden recollection of the wistful face with which Willie had received her command to remain in the garden until tea was over rising up before her to disprove her assertion.

'Oh, let him come in,' urged Archie. 'Let him sit here by me. May I go and call him? It is too bad for him to wait for us. May I go, Mrs. Fraser?' and, rising from his seat, he stood waiting for her response.

'Why, yes, to be sure,' said the delighted mother, 'if you won't mind his bein' pretty childish. He'll like to come, but I thought may be you wouldn't care to have him. You'll find him just outside.'

'Just outside' he did find him, looking the image of despair; for, little as poor Willie understood, he fully comprehended the fact that he was shut out from the pleasant gathering for some unknown reason connected with himself, and in which he was in some mysterious way in fault. Archie found it very difficult to persuade him that his mother had sent for him; but finally he made him understand, by means of speaking very slowly

and distinctly, that the embargo upon his appearance at the table had been removed, and, taking him by the hand, led him into the room, and placed him at the table between his mother and himself.

Mrs. Fraser need not have been afraid that Willie's somewhat unusual table manners would prove too annoying to her guests, for the boy was so much engrossed in staring open-mouthed at the visitors that he did not touch a morsel of the food which Archie piled upon his plate, loading it with all the good things with which the table groaned. The gay talk and laughter, the bright faces, the clatter of knives and forks, confused and bewildered him; and yet he enjoyed the pleasant tumult, and sat looking from one to another with a broad, unmeaning smile upon his foolish face.

'Do see how he enjoys it all,' said Mrs. Fraser, leaning past her son and speaking to Archie. 'He won't disturb any one, after all, for he's too much wrapped up in what is goin' on to think of eating. It does my heart good to see him, for he don't have very good times, poor lad. Did you ever have any one that wasn't quite so bright as other folks in your own family, you and your brother Jack?'

'No,' said Archie, with rather an accent of surprise in his tone; 'Jack is my only brother, and we have no sisters.'

'Well, well, now, I just thought you must have known, both of you, what it was to see folks turn off impatient like and scornful from such a one. Nobody seems to know that they need more love than other folks; nobody but his mother thinks he's got any feelin's in him, and he so 'cute and knowin' too, and Miss Josie talkin', and he lookin' on so pleased. Of course I don't mean he

understands her when she's rattlin' on so fast and merry, but he knows she's talkin'; and I thought you must have knowed just what the pain is, to make you so considerate like and thoughtful for him and for his mother,' she added, with a beaming look, which would have repaid Archie for any amount of annoyance which the idiot boy might have caused him.

Perhaps but few boys of Archie's age would have appreciated the beautiful tenderness which flowed through the life of this abrupt, strong, masculine woman; but, coming in contact as it did with every rough point in her character, and standing out beside them in vivid contrast, it greatly interested his thoughtful mind, and touched his heart as well.

'Now, Mrs. Fraser, we must be very impolite, and run away at once,' said Josie, as soon as they had left the tea-table. 'Will you forgive us if we leave you the moment we have eaten our supper? I think that there is a certain mother down in Yarmouth who will be beginning to look out a little anxiously for her children before long.'

'Then I'll not ask you to stay another minute,' said Mrs. Fraser. 'If you think she'll be frettin', I wouldn't keep you if I could; and, dear me! you can't take a basket of eggs, nor my nice butter neither, and the hens layin' so beautiful too, a horsebackin'. That's too bad, ain't it? You'd oughter carry saddlebags, as they used to in old times;—and no cakes for the blessed twins, and them baked a purpose. Two fruit cakes I mean, and all iced beautiful with their names atop, the last day I baked, for the next time you come. If I could only get time to drive down! But oh, see, when you send me the blue tie, couldn't the young gentleman drive up, and

take back the cake? And you won't forget it, Miss Josie, dear? And her hair now, don't it look beautiful under that hat? so soft them curls are, and so sunny like; she always did become a horse so well. When I was a girl I wore 'em myself, and very good lookin' Joseph thought me too, if I do say so myself, and me the mother of this great boy.'

Josie was already mounted with Bertram's aid, and now interrupted her voluble hostess by leaning down to bid her good-bye.

'Good-bye, dear heart, good-bye, and God's blessin' go with you wherever you go; and every one of you too, for you've made me as happy as a queen with your good, bright young faces and your kindly ways. Come again, and as often as you can. We'll be always glad to see 'em, won't we, Willie? Dear me, Willie! and do you know that this young gentleman is coming back very soon indeed to see us again?'

She had spoken the last words very slowly and clearly. The boy looked up at Archie, toward whom his mother had pointed, with a pleased smile; and then his wandering eyes moved to and fro until they finally rested on Jack. He stared fixedly at him for a moment, and then, lifting his hand very deliberately, stretched it out toward him. The whole party watched him silently for an instant, trying to divine his meaning, his mother also looking intently into his vague, uncertain face. All at once her own face lighted, and she exclaimed,

'Oh, what a stupid woman I am! a donkey couldn't beat me, nor a goose either. He's askin' you to come with your brother. Of course, Willie;' and again the rapid, eager tones grew quiet and subdued. 'Willie, do you want Mr. Jack over there to come and see you?'

The large round head was nodded slowly.

'I knew it ; of course he did. Isn't he just too 'cute ?' and the mother looked up, her keen eyes soft and glistening now, into Jack's face. ' You'll come ; it will please him so, and he hasn't much pleasure in his poor life.'

' Certainly I will,' said Jack, heartily.

Another good-bye was spoken, more wishes uttered for a pleasant journey home, and the little party rode away, leaving the mother standing proud and happy, with her beloved helpless son beside her.

## IX.

### CAPTAIN BERT.

‘WHAT’S the matter, Bert? You look as if you had the world on your back.’

‘Do I?’ and Bertram looked up with a laugh as Archie spoke. ‘To tell the truth, Archie, I feel a little sober this morning. I’m troubled about Jack, and about Ned too.’

‘Why? What’s up?’

‘I don’t know, and that’s just the trouble. I am certain that something is going wrong, and I can’t find out what it is.’

‘What makes you think so?’

‘The way that the boys both act. There’s something on hand that they don’t want us to know anything of.’

‘Well, what if there is?’ replied Archie. ‘There’s no reason why we should meddle with their concerns, so long as they keep out of mischief. You mustn’t play captain too much in earnest, Bert. Jack, for one, will never stand it.’

‘I don’t want to play captain,’ said Bertram, his face flushing; ‘but I do want to stand true to the trust Uncle Herbert placed in us.’

‘Don’t fire up at nothing, old chap. So do I want to stand true to father; but so do Jack and Ned, I’m sure. Why do you suspect them?’

‘Because they are so much with Fred Vickars, and so

manifestly have some secret with him which they do not want us to discover. If it were only Jack who was concerned in this thing, I should not feel so worried, for there is no reason why he should confide his plans and operations to me ; but with Ned it is different. He has always been in the habit of telling me everything, and now he is hiding something from me ; and it is something that disturbs and troubles him too, for he mutters about it in his sleep. He never had a secret from me before ; and he certainly would not go to Jack and Fred with his confidences now, instead of to me, if all were right.'

The boys were sauntering slowly up and down the garden walk, waiting for the remainder of the young people to come out and play a game of croquet. As Bertram looked at Archie in speaking his last words, his cousin met his glance with a very grave and serious expression on his face.

'Look here, Bert,' he said, after a moment's silence ; 'I think you are jealous. You don't mean to keep Ned tied to your coat-tails for ever, do you ?'

'Archie, do you mean that ?' asked Bertram, without replying to the question. 'Do you really think that I am jealous of Ned ?'

'Yes, I do,' said Archie. 'I don't want to hurt your feelings, Bert, but don't you honestly think now that if Jack had been the only one to take Fred up so vigorously, you would have been far less likely to suspect mischief ? You know I think you're about the best fellow going, so you won't be mad, will you, if I do pick a hole in your armour ?'

'I would rather you'd have found a hole anywhere than there,' said Bertram, beginning to stride along with

very rapid steps. 'I hate a jealous fool, who can't share the hearts of those he loves with others.'

'You dislike Vickars so much,' said Archie, trying to soothe Bertram's feelings without taking back his own words, 'that perhaps you are the less willing on that account to find Ned so friendly with him. I must say I don't see any reason to worry yourself about either of them, though. You know just what sort of a chap Jack is,—he's always as thick as hops with somebody; and why shouldn't Ned have a secret with them without our knowledge? Cheer up, old fellow! Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.'

'Too strong on the captain, jealous and fussy;' and Bertram laughed somewhat uneasily. 'I've made a good impression on you this morning, Archie.'

'Yes, you have,' said Archie earnestly; 'for almost any other fellow would have been as mad as a hornet, and you take my plain speaking like a king. Here they come. All out for croquet!'

'Yes,' said Ned, who had appeared at the door with Fred and Jack. 'We have been waiting for Miss Josie. She will be here in a moment. Fred and Jack and I will play against you two and Miss Josie.'

A pang shot through Bertram's heart.

A little more than a fortnight had passed since they had left home, and what a change had come over Ned! The thin, pale cheeks had rounded out, and gained a clear colour; the weak limbs, which had scarcely seemed able to support the slight frame, had become firm and strong; the lifeless voice had grown buoyant and gay, and those words had rung out in a full, rich tone, such as had not sounded from Ned's lips for many a long day.



And yet they shot a pang through Bertram's heart. Was it true, that thought of Archie's? Did he want to keep his brother at his side, leaning upon him, clinging to him for ever? Was he really jealous of the boy's love for another? It was such a little thing. He was to stand against him, by his own choice, in a game. It was such a very, very little thing, and yet it hurt him sorely.

The pain it caused him seemed to prove Archie's suspicions. At another moment he would not have called it by its right name; he would have thought it simply an elder brother's dislike to seeing Ned's friendship with one whom he himself did not wholly trust. But Archie's words had opened his eyes, and he knew that that sharp pain was the aching of a jealous heart. For a moment he stood battling with himself, for Bertram Morton was not a boy to yield without a struggle to a fault which he could not help but see; and Archie watched him unobserved, not having failed to notice the words and their effect.

'There! I knew he'd come out all right,' he said to himself a moment later. 'Bert's a real true Christian. There's no mistake about it.'

For he had watched the struggle through; had seen the pain in the boyish face, the quick suspicion and self-mistrust, the fight for the victory; and then had heard the bugle note of the conqueror, as, stepping forward, Bertram had exclaimed,

'Well, here is Miss Josie. Come on! we will beat you on your own terms;' and with a bright, untroubled face had led the way to the croquet ground, swinging his mallet above his head, and singing as he went.

But jealous though he was, and felt himself to be, of

Ned's growing intimacy with Fred Vickars, his suspicions were only too well founded. Vickars was a bold, adventurous fellow,—one of those spirits to whom the mere fact that a certain enjoyment was a forbidden pleasure made that desire the one thing to be attained at any risk. Just now the height of his ambition was to drive Brown Bessie, the fiery little horse by which Mr. Spencer set such store; and as he had proved that no amount of persuasion would induce that gentleman to yield to his wish, he had fully determined to carry out his plan irrespective of his prohibition.

Reckless as he was, however, he did not care to assume the whole responsibility of the undertaking, and so had unfolded his purpose to Jack, who, careless, hasty, thoughtless fellow that he was, had received it with applause, and promised with perfect delight to join him. But Fred was not satisfied even then. He had determined, if it were a feasible thing, to drag Edward Morton also into the mischievous plot, partly because he wanted to have as many as possible engaged in it, but principally because he had conceived a violent dislike to Bertram, and was glad of the opportunity to annoy and distress him, as he knew that he would do by leading his brother into an act of such wrong, and of such abuse of the hospitality of their kind entertainer. As to proposing to either Bertram or Archie to join in anything of this kind, he had far too much quickness of discernment to think of it for a moment; but he knew that Jack's love of adventure, headstrong will, and want of reflection were all on his side, and was quite sure that a vivid painting of the promised enjoyment, and a due amount of coaxing and persuasion, would draw Edward also into the net.

'The more the merrier,' he said, urging upon Jack the necessity of inducing Ned to join them. 'We won't tell the other fellows, for the buggy won't hold but three; and besides, if we ask Bertram, he'll want to boss it over us, and he runs this captain affair into the ground quite too much already.'

That last clause accomplished his purpose. 'This captain affair' had been a sore point with Jack all through. He had thus far kept his promise to yield to Bertram's decision in any mooted question among the party; but he had done so with a very rebellious spirit, Fred Vickars unfortunately always seeming to be at hand to throw oil on the little flame of vexation and annoyance. Here was an opportunity of showing his independence of his cousin's authority, against which, seldom and unwillingly as it was used, he fretted with an impatience which Fred was not slow to see, nor loath to use for his own advantage.

To Ned, with mind and body just recovering tone and energy, just rousing from the long inertia of weakness and lassitude into the full enjoyment of all the sports and pleasures which had been so long denied him, the proposition came with a wild sort of excitement and delight. As he had gained strength and vigour day by day, he had thrown himself with a perfect *abandon* of enjoyment into every game and frolic that was proposed; and he had seized upon this new idea of Fred's, urged so enthusiastically both by himself and Jack, with the same earnestness. He had held back at first from the thought of concealment from Bertram; but that had been a short-lived difficulty. A little persuasion, a little added colouring to the bright picture, and his scruples melted and vanished, to return, it is true, whenever he was alone

with his brother, but to be put to flight as often by a word or a look from Fred or Jack.

The visit of the five boys at Mr. Spencer's home had been one of almost unmixed pleasure. Mr. Spencer and his wife and daughter had devoted themselves to their amusement in every way ; and although the quiet little town did not, in itself, afford any gay pleasures, the two weeks had sped away so blithely, that it seemed impossible that the time had come for their promised visit to the Point. So it was, however ; and Captain Rankin had already been up to Mr. Spencer's, to say that his boat would be in readiness to take them down on the afternoon of the following day—including Fred also in his urgent and hearty invitation.

There had been drives to the Ponds, a beautiful little chain of inland lakes, not many miles from the old homestead ; a picnic to Tusket Lakes, and a delightful day's fishing there, crowned by a moonlight ride home along the borders of the beautiful waters ; there had been berrying parties, croquet parties, shooting matches, and what not, until our boys had come to the conclusion that this was the place of all others that they had ever visited for thorough enjoyment, expressing themselves to that effect with a vigour and earnestness that fully compensated Mr. Spencer for his kind efforts to please and amuse them.

This last afternoon of their stay was to be spent in an excursion to a gold mine which had been in operation near the coast for some little time, and which the boys were very anxious to see, none of them having had the opportunity at any time of witnessing the operations of miners at their work.

The game of croquet had just been brought to a

close satisfactorily to those players of whom Fred was chief, but in a manner quite the reverse to the other side, when Mr. Spencer came out upon the ground to tell them that the carriage and horses were waiting for them.

‘So you are thinking of leaving us, Fred?’ he said, when they were fairly started, some stowed away in the large, roomy carriage, and the remainder on horseback. ‘Mrs. Spencer tells me that Captain Rankin has persuaded you to join these runaways to-morrow. What will your father and mother say when they return from Halifax and find you flown?’

‘I think they will not object, sir,’ said Fred. ‘If they do, they can summon me back without much delay. I have had a splendid visit here, and enjoyed myself heartily; but I rather fancy the idea of going down to the Cape for a few days with the other fellows.’

‘Very naturally,’ said Mr. Spencer. ‘There is no apology necessary. I have no doubt that you will have a very pleasant visit there; and when you tire of it, you know that our home is always ready, with both house and heart room for you all. You seem like my own boys already. I don’t know what we shall do without you. What is the matter, Ned?’

Ned was on horseback, riding close beside the carriage; and as Mr. Spencer looked up at him in speaking, the boy’s whole face had flushed, and then as suddenly paled again.

‘Nothing, sir; a mere flush, I suppose,’ said Ned, who had felt the rising colour rush over cheek and brow, and he laughed as he spoke; but the laugh made Bertram turn and look at him with an uneasy, watchful expression on his face.

Something was wrong. He knew it now. Perhaps he was jealous ; perhaps he was, unconsciously to himself, inclined to be arbitrary ; but even if he were, there was something amiss with Edward ; of that he was positively certain now. He had seen it in the confused and guilty look which had overspread the boy's face as those kind words of hospitable welcome had been spoken.

## X.

### THE GOLD MINES.

THE drive to the mines lay through a beautiful piece of country, dotted here and there with bright sheets of water, lying away in the distance on their right, between the dark spruce woods, whose grave foliage stood out in strong relief from the silver water, and against the clear blue sky ; while on their left, from time to time, they caught glimpses of the grand old Bay of Fundy, sleeping quietly in the sunlight, its smooth, calm waters so treacherously still that no one would imagine that a stiff breeze could lash them into a wild fury which would crush proud ships like toys in its mad grasp.

‘The bay looks like a great lake to-day,’ said Fred. ‘One would scarcely think that it could be so fierce and terrible as it is after a storm.’

‘It seems calm enough from here,’ replied Josie. ‘We look out so far over the land that we do not see the breakers. Wait until you reach the Cream-pot, and then you will have some idea of the force of the surf on this coast. We leave the carriage very soon, don’t we, father ?’

‘Yes, at this house beyond us. We have quite a rough walk to take, boys. Lift Mrs. Spencer and Josie out, Bertram, and I will drive a little farther on.’

‘You are not driving Brown Bess to-day, I see, sir,’ said Bertram, as, having aided the ladies to alight, he assisted Mr. Spencer in tying the horse to a post ; while

some of the others walked slowly on with Mrs. Spencer and her daughter.

'No. She has not been out for two days, and I knew that it would not be safe to leave her here. I drove her into town this morning, and found her in quite too high spirits to be content to stand at this post for an hour or more.'

'That's jolly, isn't it?' said Fred, who was tying his horse beside Ned's at another post. 'We'll have a glorious time. I noticed that they had not driven her much this last day or two. She'll be in a gay mood to-night, I tell you. That little drive down to town this morning will only have whetted her appetite for a sharper trot. I saw Jack's eyes dance as he turned away with Miss Josie. He must have heard what Mr. Spencer said. But what in the world made you colour up like that, Ned, when the old gentleman was doing the polite to us a while ago?'

'Just because we were doing the impolite, I suppose,' said Ned. 'I tell you, I feel half ashamed of this, Fred. It seems kind of mean, and Bertram would think it awfully shabby—uncourteous, you know, and all that sort of thing.'

'Bertram, Bertram, Bertram!' said Fred, in a tone of great annoyance. 'I never was so sick of any one name in my life. I wouldn't be so tied fast to an elder brother's apron-string for all my father's money.'

'I'm not tied fast to his apron-string,' said Ned hotly. 'What nonsense you talk! Can't I say what his notions are without saying that I mean to give in to them? He's not so great on the elder brother either; he's only two years older than I am. There's no reason at all why I should obey or consult him.'



'I should say not; most decidedly. I only thought you did consult him and defer to him about everything. Of course it's none of my business. I don't want to interfere.'

'Why don't you keep quiet then?' said Ned, irritably, for his vexation with himself had made him even more than usually impatient of Fred's taunts. 'If you'd mind your own affairs, it would be better for both of us. I can get along without either you or Bertram to meddle with me.'

'Oh, don't get into a fret, Ned,' said Vickars, soothingly. 'I did not mean to plague you. It does provoke me, I confess, to see Bertram advise and try to control you as he does, for you've quite too much good sense and pluck to be led like a child. Of course fellows want a deal of petting and coddling, and all that sort of thing, when they're sick; and of course they can't care for themselves, and are quite willing to be cared for; but Bertram ought to see that that is all over and done with you now, and to fall back into his proper place, and let you take yours. He is a little spoiled by his position, that's all; it will come right in a short time, if you just stand up for yourself, and let him see that your mind and your will are as strong as your body.'

'Come, boys, come,' floated back to them on the clear soft air in Mr. Spencer's voice. 'What are you lagging along so for?'

They were all walking across the rough ground between the road and the coast, Mr. Spencer and Bertram taking the lead; and Fred and Edward, in the dread of being overheard, had fallen quite behind-hand. They hurried on to overtake their companions, coming up to them as they reached the main party, who had gone on before them.

The thunder of the surf, as it struck the huge broken masses of rock which lined the coast, told them, long before they reached it, that they would find Josie's words amply verified. But when they arrived at the shore, and stood upon the grand precipice whose walls formed the sides of the Cream-pot, every one stood silent, awed into stillness by the grand and fearful sight. All around them lay torn, jagged masses of rock, piled up in magnificent confusion, as if some violent convulsion of the bed of the sea had dragged them from their former positions and hurled them headlong upon the shore. Shattered columns, ruined battlements, desolated castles, were all represented here; and through and over all the mad waves roared and dashed in a perfect fury of force and strength.

Beneath them, shut in between the walls of massive rock, was a seething, boiling sea of milk-white foam, into whose depths, Mr. Spencer told his hearers, a ship had been swept only a year ago in a gale, and had been battered, torn, and broken by the rush of those cruel waves, until masts, bulwarks, all were crushed into atoms, which, washed up upon the rocks, could scarcely be distinguished as a part of the staunch vessel which had ridden into so frightful a harbour a few hours before.

It was a strange thing to stand there with this boiling cauldron at one's feet, and the roar and tumult of the waves sounding in one's ears, and then to look away across the bay, and see its waters lying so calm and still just beyond in the sunlight. The thought struck Josie, and she turned suddenly to Archie, who stood beside her, watching the foaming waters with a rapt attention which saw and heard nothing else.

'Oh, this treacherous sea!' she said. 'Let us go away

from it. I always have a weight upon my heart when I am here. It is an awful place.'

'I think it is a glorious place,' said Archie. 'I would like to spend a week right here, where I could come to this spot every day. It is beautiful, beautiful! And yet—that poor, poor ship!'

He dropped his head upon his hand again, and sat gazing down into the sea with the same absorbed look his face had worn when Josie had first roused him, until he was wakened again by a shout from Jack.

'Holloa, dreamer! You'll pitch into the cream if you fall asleep there; and it won't be a pleasant bath-tub. Come along! We are off for the mine.'

Looking up with a sudden start at the loud call, Archie saw that the whole party were quite in advance of him; and, springing hastily to his feet, he followed them, but only for a short distance, and that with many regretful glances behind him. A long, lingering look back, another, and another, and the temptations of the spot overcame him.

'I'll be with you in a jiffy,' he called out to Jack. 'Go ahead. I'll follow after.'

Turning back, he took up his former position on the very verge of the precipice; and that was the last that the rest of the party saw or heard of Archie, until they came back to find him still sitting there, with his quiet face gazing down into the wild waters.

'I wonder if they'll let us go down the shaft,' said Jack, as they neared the mouth of the mine, having paused more than once in their walk over the rough, stony pathway, to watch the men who were at work in the various low wooden buildings. 'Do they go up and down in a bucket, Mr. Spencer?'

'Yes, and I daresay they will take you with them if you wish to go. At any rate, we can ask. There! I hear the rattling of the chains now. If a party has just come up, we may be in good time for a ride down. There is the entrance a little to your left.'

Entering a small building of unpainted boards, they found themselves at the very mouth of the shaft.

Supported on its verge was a large wooden bucket, heavily hooped with iron, and attached by a strong chain to a windlass above. Two men, each with a small lamp fastened on the front of his hat, were leaning against the windlass; while a third stood near, trimming the wick of his lamp, which, as soon as it was ready, he placed on his hat, first lighting it.

The three men all greeted Mr. Spencer with a smile and a nod.

'Are you just going down, Mullen?' he asked of the miner who had just lighted his lamp.

'Yes, sir. Me and Tom Duffie is going next. Tom 'll be here shortly. Ah! there he is now.'

A large man, dressed in the coarse garb of the miners, but with a bright, intelligent face, and a bearing which marked him at once as a person of more than ordinary powers, both of mind and body, entered the low doorway as the workman spoke.

'Mr. Spencer here?' he said, coming quickly forward. 'I am heartily glad to see you. And the ladies too? You are brave walkers to clamber over this mass of stone and rubbish. One of these days we will have things in better condition here. Everything must have its beginning, and we cannot afford just yet to have matters as they should be.'

'Are you making good progress?' asked Mr. Spencer.

'Yes, sir, very good, considering the force at our command. You will have an opportunity of seeing some of the real article by stopping at the crusher as you return. They have been at work all day, and have had an unusual yield. I think that these young gentlemen would enjoy a visit there very much.'

'This one,' said Mr. Spencer, laying his hand upon Jack's shoulder, 'would enjoy a visit below very much. Can you take him with you?'

'Yes, they can all come down, if they wish to do so. I will go with two of them, and Mullen can bring the others. You may step right into the bucket; the men are waiting to lower us.'

Fred Vickars moved forward to join Jack; and the bucket having been pushed off the verge of the shaft, they stepped into it, Duffie standing on its edge holding fast by the chains.

'Off with us now!' said Duffie; and, with a prolonged creaking and groaning, the bucket, with its living freight, moved slowly down out of the daylight into a twilight which soon darkened into the blackest night, whose only relief was the gleam of the tiny lamp in the miner's hat.

'Pretty black this, isn't it?' he asked, when they had left the last glimmering ray of daylight behind them. 'I rather think that this is the darkest darkness you ever saw.'

'Or felt,' said Jack. 'It seems as if you could almost take hold of it. What is that for?' for a shrill whistle had suddenly startled the stillness around them.

'That says, slacken speed. We are close upon the works. Can't you hear the drilling now?'

'Oh, yes, here we are. Look at all the little lights, Fred. That's a jolly way to work.'

'How would you like to be a miner?' asked Duffie, as having assisted the boys to leave the bucket, he gave another shrill whistle, which was answered by a rapid rattling of the chains, and the almost immediate disappearance of their queer carriage.

'I don't think that I should take to it,' said Jack. 'Rushing that bucket up and down isn't bad for a change, but I don't know as I'd care to take it as a regular diet. I like the sunlight too well to be willing to give it up for such blackness as this. If I were a workman, I think I'd rather be above ground.'

'But it pays well,' said Fred, to whom the question of dollars and cents was always the first to be answered. 'Miners have high wages.'

'That may be; but I'd rather work at a dollar a day in the sunlight. Come on, let's see what they are about.'

Mr. Duffie proved himself a good showman, who not only thoroughly understood his own business, but also thoroughly understood the art of explaining and simplifying to those who were less well posted than himself. Never tiring of the many questions (and four eager, interested boys can ask an infinitude); patiently explaining the uses of the curious implements; pointing out, with a clearness which none but a very dull mind could misunderstand, the whole process of drilling, blasting, picking, etc.; full of anecdotes of miners and miners' experiences,—he proved himself a prince among cicerones, and brought his four young visitors up into the beautiful light of day once more with a very clear understanding of the first principles of gold-mining, and a very great admiration and liking for Thomas Duffie.

'If you would like to go over to the crusher now, I can go with you,' he said, in answer to an earnest declara-

tion from Jack that if he could tell them how the stone was treated after it left the mine, he should have the whole thing at his finger-ends. 'I must see a man there this afternoon, and can drive over now as well as later. There are those there who could explain it all as well as I, however.'

'Oh, no !' said Jack ; and his exclamation was echoed in a chorus by the other boys. 'I never heard a fellow set things out as you do. I don't know how it is, but you drive a thing into a man's head in spite of him ; he can't help but see it. I wish I had you at home to pound the trigonometry and the Greek, and all the rest of them, in for me. I rather think Mr. Tryon (that's my schoolmaster) and I wouldn't run foul of one another quite so often if I had. What do you say to it, Mr. Duffie ?'

'I say that you would have to change places with me as to the Greek and so forth, and do some pounding in your turn,' replied Mr. Duffie, with a smile. 'I think I will stick to my own business, sir. A man is only half a man out of his proper sphere, and I'd make a far better miner than school teacher. The best thing for us both is to try to stand up in the places where God has put us, doing His work there faithfully and honestly, and never lowering ourselves by putting our hands to anything unworthy of true men. That's grave talk, too,' he added pleasantly, catching a troubled look on Jack's face, which seemed to be reflected on Ned's also. 'I didn't mean to take the fun and spirits out of you, my boy ; but there's such a many faithless men around us in these days, that I always feel like speaking a word of warning to a gay young lad that has as yet never dishonoured his youth by a mean, dishonest deed. Now, Mr. Spencer, if you are ready, I am at your service.'

‘They’ll spoil Ned for to-night’s frolic yet, Jack,’ said Fred, as, having reached the second portion of the gold works, the two boys stood together, watching the motion of the ponderous crusher, as its enormous weight fell with resistless force upon the masses of broken stone, which, brought from the mine, were thrown beneath it to be crushed to atoms in its descent. ‘Did you see the look he gave you when Duffie was yarning away there about his honest men and so on? I wish he’d hold his tongue. Ned’s just about half against it now, and he’ll give the whole thing up, I’m afraid. He had another Bertram tantrum a while ago. Bertram has ruled this roost until you can’t any one of you turn your heads on your own shoulders without his permission.’

‘You shut up, Vickars,’ said Jack, with more energy than civility. ‘I rather think Ned and I can look after ourselves. This is no low, mean thing such as Duffie meant, though. It’s only a bit of mischief such as any fellow would pitch into if he had the chance.’

But, for all that, the thought of Duffie’s words brought a bright colour into his brown cheek, and he could not look up to meet even Fred’s eyes with his usual manly, straightforward glance.

Crash, crash, crash, went the great crusher with its grinding motion, and down ran the broken stone and loose sand from its mouth into a trough, through which rushed a stream of water that tossed and dashed and turned it as it poured through it into a receptacle below, from which it was passed on from one to another, the water in each separate trough growing purer and purer, changing from a thick, muddy stream of a greyish colour, filled with sand and *débris*, to a clear miniature brook; until, in the purling stream in the last trough, they could



see small particles of gold lying pure and clear at its bottom.

'I should think this was a paying business,' said Fred, as he leaned down to look at the shining gold. 'Do you wash out as much as this every day?'

'Oh, no! You remember that I told you at the shaft that they had had a very unusual yield. We cannot even tell yet whether it is going to pay us to keep the shaft open; but we hope for the best, and shall work on until we prove that we cannot do so any longer with profit. But I do not like even to think of that. When I have once put my hand to a thing, I want to carry it right on. I never like to go back upon anything.'

'No,' said Fred, quickly, with a sly glance at Ned to see if he were listening to the conversation. 'I do hate a chap who hasn't the manliness and pluck to stand up to what he undertakes. I like a fellow who puts things right through at whatever cost, don't you?'

'Yes, at whatever personal cost, if so be it does not touch his truth and honour,' said Duffie. 'But sometimes it takes more pluck and manliness to go back from something you have undertaken than to carry it through.'

Jack's rollicking laugh broke in on Duffie's sober words; but when the latter glanced at him with a questioning look, the boy's face was turned from him.

'Didn't you catch it on that, though?' he said to Vickars, as Fred stepped up to where he stood, with a very dissatisfied expression of countenance. 'I had to laugh, I couldn't help it, you were so completely sold. Don't try that on again, old fellow, it don't seem to fit;' and again his merry laugh rang out as careless and free as if his mind were wholly at rest.

'What is that happy fellow enjoying so heartily?' said

Mrs. Spencer, laughing from pure sympathy with the joyous sound. 'What is the joke, Jack?'

'Oh! Fred thought he had a lump of sugar, and when he put it in his mouth it turned out to be salt; that's all, ma'am.'

'Oh, how disagreeable!' said Josie, with so much concern that even Fred echoed Jack's second peal of merriment. 'Can't you get him a glass of water? They must have it in the building, I should think.'

'I am afraid these saucy boys are trying to take you in, Josie,' said her father. 'Here, you scapegrace!' and he caught Jack's arm as the boy came up to the side of the carriage, with a face the very picture of fun and enjoyment. 'Jump in here. I must keep you under my own fatherly eye, or you'll have the world turned upside down before we know it. See that he behaves himself, Josie.'

'Yes, sir, I'll try,' said Josie. 'I'll put him on his honour, and then he'll have to be good; for if I set myself to watch him, I won't even dare to wink, for he would be off and at some prime piece of mischief in that one minute.'

She looked at Jack as she spoke, and he looked back at her so roguishly that no one would ever have imagined that he was saying impatiently to himself: 'Honour, honour, honour! How they do all harp on that word What has got into them?'

## XI.

### BROWN BESSIE.

THE family retired at an unusually early hour that evening, the ladies being very tired, and, to Bertram's surprise, the boys also seeming uncommonly ready for bedtime. Archie, in accordance with a promise given some days before, had gone out to spend the evening, and the night also, with a friend whose acquaintance he had made in the town, and whose love for research into the how and the why and the wherefore of everything new which he saw or heard of made him a companion dear to Archie's soul. 'The two philosophers,' as the other boys called them, were already sworn friends, never so contented as when they were off together on expeditions into the woods, or to the shore, from which they would return laden with spoils, to the intense disgust of Jack, who declared that Archie made their room a menagerie of wild beasts, and a laboratory for the manufacture of odious smells.

As for himself, Bertram felt restless and wakeful, and lay tossing on his bed, half inclined to rise again and sit down to read. Was it only because Ned had gone into the next room, to occupy Archie's place for the night, that he could not rest? Had his jealousy of his brother's love made such headway as this without his having had a suspicion of the truth? Vexed and irritated with himself by the mere thought, he did his best to put it from him, and to compose himself to sleep, as the boys

seemed to have done, for not a sound issued from the next room.

All at once he roused with a start from a doze into which he had fallen. He was sure that the lock of his door had turned with a sharp click in the hand of some one who was trying to fasten it without noise. In an instant he was on his feet; and, as he rose, he caught the sound of a whispered, vexed exclamation, and a smothered laugh. The slight noise came from the room occupied by the other boys; and, glancing toward the door of communication, he saw that it was shut, and on trying to open it found it locked. A sudden, indefinable fear and dread came upon Bertram, as he stood with his hand upon the door, the moonlight streaming in at the window, making the room almost as light as if it were day. The curious look he had seen in Ned's face when Mr. Spencer had spoken to him so kindly, the evidently secret conversation between him and Fred, a score of little nothings of expression and word and incident flashed across his mind, and, fitting the one into the other with a curious nicety, made him positively certain that there was mischief afoot. And now they had locked him into his room, Ned having first left him there to sleep alone, while he took up his own temporary abode with his cousin and his friend.

'Ned! Ned!' called Bertram, softly, afraid of disturbing the household. 'Do unlock this door, there's a good fellow!'

No sound came from the closed apartment.

'Ned, don't get into a scrape. I'm sure there's something wrong going on. Jack, remember your promise to your mother. Don't do anything that we'll be ashamed of, boys.'

Still there was no answer.

What should he do? Should he assert his authority as leader of the little company; or would the assumption of such a right only make matters worse? If the door had been wide open, and he could have seen everything that was going on in the room, he could not have been more confidently assured in his own mind that some serious piece of wrong-doing was at least contemplated. He listened again, heard the window cautiously raised, and then his resolution was taken. His uncle had confided this trust to him. So far as its influence went, he must use it.

'Boys,' he said earnestly, 'listen to me for one moment. I am convinced that some wretched piece of mischief is on hand. Don't disgrace Uncle Will and Aunt Lilla, and yourselves as well. Ned! Ned! have you lost all your love for me? have I lost all my influence with you?' Ned! Jack! in Uncle Will's name, by his authority, I tell you you must open this door.'

Then the answer came, in a voice of concentrated passion, such as Bertram had never heard from Jack before.

'Bertram Morton, if you don't go back to bed, and mind your own business, I'll come in and put you there, and you won't come out again in a hurry either. This door is locked because we choose to have it so, and so it shall be. Take yourself off to bed, or we'll make it the worse for you.'

Bertram was not a passionate boy, but the hot blood burned like fire in his cheeks at the insulting tone and words. For an instant he stood silent, trying to control himself; then he said, speaking in a tone whose forced composure was manifest even through the closed door,

'Ned, I implore and beseech you to come back to me. If neither of you have any regard for Uncle Will's commands, you at least must listen to me. I entreat, I command you to come back to your own room.'

If Bertram's temper had not wholly obtained the mastery over him, he would not have spoken those words, nor have used the peremptory tone of authority in which they were uttered. The moment that they had left his lips, he would have given all he possessed to recall them ; but it was too late.

A sneering laugh, and some muttered words about 'the Captain's little boy,' spoken in Fred's voice, echoed by as contemptuous a laugh from Jack, was followed the next moment by a rush across the floor, and a kick upon the locked door.

'Get away from here, you miserable old tyrant ! I've broken from you once for all. I'll never mind another word you say to me if I live to be a hundred years old. Get away from here !'

'Be quiet, Ned ; you'll rouse the house,' said Vickars, as the boy in his passion struck the door with his foot for the second time. 'Bertram Morton,' and the calm, contemptuous voice came clearly through the key-hole, every word as distinct as if he had been within Bertram's room, 'you had better take Jack's advice, and go back to bed. You are not mistaken in supposing that we are having a little fun together in here : we are doing just that very thing, and we mean to do it in spite of you. Go to bed.'

That was the last word spoken between the belligerents. Bertram sat down at his window, heated, hurt, indignant, and very angry with himself. All was silent as the grave in the next room. Whatever the fun spoken

of by Fred might consist in, it certainly was not in noise.

After a while the boy left his seat, and threw himself upon the bed once more, first looking at his watch.

'Only half-past eleven,' he said to himself. 'I could not have been in bed more than half an hour when they locked the door.'

The blood rushed all over his face again at the recollection, and his pulse throbbed fast as every word of the sharp conversation passed through his mind. Some little time went by, and then he rose again, and knelt down beside the bed. A long while he knelt there, with his hot face drooped upon his hands. He had a troubled story to pour into the ear which was bent to listen to the broken tale. A story of long provocation, of real heart-grief, of struggle, of failure, and of repentance; but when it was all told, Bertram Morton laid his head upon the pillow and fell quietly asleep.

If he could but have looked into the next room, he would not have marvelled at the stillness which reigned there, for it was empty and deserted. No sooner had Bertram retreated from the closed door than the window was noiselessly raised still higher, and the three boys crept softly out upon the roof of the piazza, and swung themselves lightly down by the pillars to the ground beneath.

The stables were at some little distance from the house, but the night was so bright that that circumstance added nothing to their difficulties, and in a very few moments Brown Bessie had been led carefully out upon the road.

'I don't half like the looks of this old vehicle,' said Jack, as with Ned's help he drew from a shed adjoining

the stable a somewhat decrepit-looking open waggon. 'I wish we dared to take out the other.'

'No, no! don't try it,' whispered Fred, who was holding Bessie by the bridle. 'That old one is strong enough, it is only shabby; and we cannot roll out the other without making a noise. Hurry up! Bessie is growing restless.'

Restless she certainly was; but she looked so beautiful, standing there in the clear starlight, throwing up her pretty head as she glanced uneasily from side to side, and stepping daintily to and fro, that her nervousness only added new fire to the boys' desire to have her entirely under their own hands. With some difficulty they succeeded in putting the harness upon her and backing her between the shafts, Fred not daring to let go her head even for a moment.

'I'll take the first drive, for a mile or so,' said Vickers. 'You can take the ribbons for another mile, Jack, and then Ned can have his turn, and so on. Hold her well in till I jump up.'

The other boys were already seated in the waggon, Jack holding the reins. Quietly loosing his grasp upon the bridle, Fred sprang lightly to his seat; and Bessie stepped out with a little mincing pace, which, had the boys known her well, would have warned them that there was trouble ahead. Knowing almost nothing, however, of the notions and eccentricities of the frisky little mare, her dance down the hill only amused and delighted them. The road was smooth, the night as bright as stars could make it, the breeze which fanned their excited faces was fresh and bracing, and all went merry as a marriage bell for the first half mile.

'The idea of saying that we could not manage her!'



exclaimed Fred indignantly. 'I've driven many a more unmanageable horse than Brown Bess, I can tell Mr. Spencer.'

'What makes her toss her head from side to side in that way?' asked Ned. 'She is uncomfortable in some way. Look out for her, Fred. We are bowling along at a pretty good pace. I never saw a horse step out so beautifully in my life. Just see how she goes! Why, she beats the wind. But she isn't comfortable, I'm sure. Is she, Jack?'

'No, I don't think she is. Perhaps it's the harness. These are not her own trappings, are they, Fred?'

'No. I brought this old set out by mistake, and thought I wouldn't go back for her own. These seemed to fit pretty well. Phew! She'll carry us over to the other side of sunrise in an hour at this rate. Whoa, Bessie, pretty little woman! whoa, little Bess!'

But Brown Bessie had no thought of slackening her wild speed. She had scarcely left her stall for the past three days; the fresh, crisp breeze was blowing in her face; the reins were held by far less powerful hands than those which generally controlled her; and, more than all, a strap of the old worn harness had slipped out of the band which held it below the buckle, and the loose end was striking her flank with a sharp, stinging snap at every step.

On, on, on, faster and faster, flew the rapid feet. The boys' eager expressions of delight subsided into silence. That first mile over which Fred was to drive had been passed long ago; but not a word did he say of relinquishing the reins.

'Fred,' said Jack suddenly, in a low, excited voice, 'this horse is running.'

'I know it,' said Fred, in the same tone.

'Can't you hold her in any more than that?'

'No; nor you couldn't either,' replied Fred, sharply.

'We'll have to let her run until she's tired. I can keep her in the road, and we won't meet anything.'

'But she'll carry us so far we won't get home before morning. And besides—O Fred! this is the road where there is that awful hill. I can hold her, I know. Give me the reins.'

He stretched out his hand, but Fred thrust him angrily aside, pushing him with his shoulder. 'Let alone! your hands are no stronger than mine. We are gone if we should loose the reins now.'

'Climb over behind him, and put your hands beneath his on the reins, and then hold in both of you, or we shall all be killed.'

The voice sounded so unlike Ned's, that in spite of their excitement both boys turned to look at him. His face was flushed, and his eyes as bright as two stars.

'Don't be frightened, Ned,' said Jack soothingly, as, with a quick spring, he threw himself back off the seat of the waggon, and dexterously obeyed Edward's suggestion.

'I am not frightened,—at least, not for myself. Poor Bert!'

On, on, on. The now frantic horse seemed to gain in speed with every leap, the added strength of Jack's grasp upon the reins not having availed in the least degree as a check upon her mad career. Less than an eighth of a mile ahead of them now lay the steep, stony hill of which Jack had spoken. No one alluded to it again, although each knew full well that the frightful leap was close before them. Three pairs of eager, shining

eyes were watching for it ; three beating hearts were throbbing with awful expectation, but not one word was spoken.

Now the hill was just before them.

‘Brace your feet against the dash-board !’ said Jack, in a short, quick tone that had not even a tremor in it.

Fred obeyed.

Over the verge of the hill went the flying horse, the two boys putting the whole force and strength of their vigorous young frames into the grasp of those four hands clenched upon the reins.

Down, down. They had almost reached the level road, when—snap went the dash-board from beneath Fred’s feet. With a wild bound, the terrified horse leaped high into the air, lost her footing as she touched the ground again, and boys, waggon, and horse rolled in frightful confusion to the bottom of the hill.

‘Hélas ! Hélas ! Je pense qu’il est tué, ce pauvre jeune gentilhomme,’ were the first words Jack heard, as he lifted his head from the grass upon the roadside, and looked up into the face of French Paul, who, with Fred, was bending over him with a most distressed expression of countenance.

‘Ned, Ned ! Is Ned hurt ?’ asked Jack, lifting himself up upon his elbow, and looking hastily around him.

His cousin was his first as he had been his last thought. Not one pang of his dread and terror through that wild ride had been due to any selfish fear. The knowledge that at any moment he might himself be lying crushed, perhaps dying, upon the road, never once drew his thought from the fact that he, with Fred, had dragged and coaxed the boy into this escapade ; and that, if he were killed, his death and Bertram’s agony would be



‘They had almost reached the level plain, when a snap went the dashboard from beneath Fred’s foot.’—(Fig. 17.)



his work. The shock of the fall had knocked him senseless, but he was otherwise unhurt; and now, as no answer was given to his eager question, he staggered to his feet, and looked about him in search of his cousin, with a face of bewildered fear.

‘Where is he?’ he asked sharply. ‘Take me to him.’

‘He’s lying just here,’ said Fred. ‘Don’t be frightened; he’s coming to. I think he is better off than you are now. Here he is.’

The boy was lying upon his back, breathing with great laboured gasps, as if he were almost suffocated.

‘Lift him up,’ said Jack, quickly. ‘He’s had the breath knocked right out of him. I saw a fellow so once before. Let him sit right up, Paul. There, so,’ as the Frenchman raised the gasping boy. ‘You’ll be all right in a few moments, Samson. Dear old boy!’

It was such an infinite delight to find that he was not dead, to see the colour begin to rise in the ashen face, and to dare to hope that Bertram would at least see him alive, however much injured he might prove to be, that he had to pet and babify him a little, for he did not know how else to testify his joy.

‘How are you now, old boy?’ he asked, as Ned turned his head to look at him, after a little, with a half smile.

‘All—right—only—choked,’ gasped Ned.

‘Aren’t you hurt anywhere else? your legs, or your back, or anything? Are you sure you’re all right?’

‘Yes—only—this,’ and he put his hand on his chest.

‘Your steam is all used up; that’s all, I think. Blow away. It will come right pretty soon. What about Bessie, Fred?’

‘Bad enough. Come and look at her.’

Leaving Paul to support Ned, who was, however, fast

regaining his own powers, Jack went with a beating heart toward the spot where the horse and waggon lay.

'How you limp!' he said, noticing that Fred walked as if in great pain. 'Is your leg hurt?'

'Yes; it is awfully bruised and cut, but I would not care a pin for that if Bess were safe. Look at her.'

The horse lay tangled in the harness and the broken shafts and wheels of the waggon, her beautiful head thrown back upon the rough stones of the road, perfectly motionless.

'She is alive yet,' said Jack, mournfully. 'I can see her chest heave, poor little Bess!'

'Poor little Bess!' repeated Fred, contemptuously. 'Miserable little miscreant, you might better say. Breaking her own neck, and nearly breaking ours as well. Wretched brute!' and, with a sudden cruel thrust of his foot, he kicked the pretty brown head forward upon the road.

'O Fred, don't!' exclaimed Jack.

His plea was echoed by a shriek which made them both start back with a cry, and brought Ned and Paul to their feet in an instant. The scream of an agonized horse is frightful enough at any time, and the guilty hearts which heard it now fairly stood still with terror. Once more it rang out, piercing the still night air with its shrill anguish; and then poor Bessie tossed her head backward upon the hard stones again, and lay motionless and still as before.

'What is to be done?' said Jack, after a silence which each seemed afraid to break.

'We must get back as quickly as possible,' replied Fred.

'And leave Bessie here?'

'Yes. What else can we do without betraying ourselves? They will think some one has intended to steal her: they will never suspect us.'

'But there is Paul,' said Ned, in a low, feeble voice.

He had walked to where they stood, and now leaned against Jack, looking very pale, but breathing with comparative ease.

'He can be disposed of. A couple of dollars will make him dumb. He *must* keep dark. It is as much as our lives are worth to have Mr. Spencer find us out.'

'Go and see if you can do anything with him,' said Jack. 'We must hurry up, for it is one o'clock now, and we are a long way from home.'

Fred was a good pleader, and the two, then five, then ten dollars were a very unanswerable argument; but still the Frenchman demurred to give the promise of secrecy demanded from him. But when Jack and Ned came to the rescue, the two pale, troubled faces, and the feeble tones of entreaty in which the younger boy urged his suit, won from him the pledge which he had been so unwilling to give; and Paul put the ten dollars away in his pocket half reluctantly, telling himself, however, by way of solace to his anxious mind, that he would pay off in the morning a debt of exactly that amount which he owed to Mrs. Fraser of the Farm, for the payment of which his creditor, knowing well that he could readily earn the money if he had but the will to work, was becoming seriously and even threateningly importunate.

The three boys turned their faces homeward with heavy steps and still heavier hearts. It was a long, slow walk, so long that Ned, exhausted and unnerved, gave out entirely. He could not walk another step, at length, and they were yet two miles from home. There



he sat upon a stone by the roadside, the very picture of abject misery, of weakness and helplessness ; while before him stood Fred, whose injured leg was growing more and more painful with every step, and Jack, whose face looked as if smiles and brightness had faded out of it for ever.

‘A gay ending this to a gay frolic,’ said Jack, with a bitter laugh. ‘Get on my back, Ned, and I’ll carry you for a while. We must reach home somehow, I suppose.’

The walk proved none the less slow, and none the livelier, for this arrangement. Jack toiled on with his burden, and Fred limped along by his side, without a word being spoken by any of the party ; and at last, just before daylight, having taken many a rest by the way, the unhappy trio crept miserably into the house, and, slipping into bed, lay down to think over their wild exploit, as wretched a set of conspirators as ever attempted to defy lawful authority.

## XII.

### A DOLEFUL MORNING.

'JACK, Jack !' called Fred softly, 'wake up ; there is something going on downstairs.'

Jack had fallen into a heavy sleep, but he raised himself up at Fred's call, fully awakened by the interest of the words.

'What is it ?'

'I don't know. There was a loud ring at the door-bell, and a few moments after I heard Mr. Spencer's voice outside, telling Pierre to saddle Templar. There he goes now. Don't you hear him trotting down the road ?'

The sound of a horse's hoofs striking the hard road, as if on a rapid trot, was distinctly audible.

'What time is it ?' asked Jack, after listening for a moment in silence to the noise of the fast retreating hoofs.

'It is almost six o'clock.'

'Pretty bad for us, isn't it ?' said Jack, turning his face toward his companion.

'Yes. I don't know how you fellows could sleep so. Just look at Ned ! He hasn't even stirred with our talking. He's perfectly sound.'

'All worn out, I'm afraid ; poor old Samson ! You see he isn't as strong yet as we are. Haven't you been asleep at all ?'

'No ; this wretched leg won't let me rest, even if I wasn't in such a fidget about Bess. Besides, I was

afraid to let myself doze off for fear I'd move and loosen some of these bandages, and so stain the sheets with blood, and let the thing out that way. We're in an awful taking, Jack, I just tell you that. Look at this thing.'

He flung back the bed covering, and, taking off the rough, thick bandages (the two legs of a pair of flannel drawers which he had cut apart for the purpose), exhibited his wounded limb to Jack's startled eyes. It was scarcely to be wondered at that he had not been able to sleep, even putting his anxiety with regard to discovery out of the question. A sharp, jagged stone had cut a deep gash in his leg a little above the knee, the torn edges of which had been tortured by the heating flannel bandage into a high state of inflammation; while the whole leg was bruised and blackened from the ankle.

'Why, Fred, this is awful! What a trump you are to bear it so! But this flannel is making terrible work here; we must get hold of something else.'

'I knew it was bad for it,' said Fred; 'but I had to stop the bleeding somehow, or they would have found us out.'

'But what will we do about it?' and Jack's face grew very long and grave. 'You can't walk straight on such a pole as that; and look at your ankle. Phew!'

'My ankle is my only hope,' said Fred, as he glanced down at his swollen and discoloured foot. 'You remember that I turned my foot under me on the rocks yesterday? Well,' as Jack nodded assent, 'that will be the point for me to rest on. The thing is sprained, I suppose; and I'll throw the blame of my limping on that.'

'But they'll want to cook it up with all sorts of

messes, poultices, and what not,—people always do,—and what will you do then?’

‘Give in, I suppose, if I can’t help myself; but I shall fight against any coddling with all my might. If I have to give up, I won’t breathe a word about the cut, you may be sure. Suppose you get up, and try if you can’t scrape up some kind of a bandage that will be a little less fiery than this. I positively can’t bear it any longer.’

Even Mr. Spencer might have felt a throb of pity for the author of the real grief which filled his heart, if he could have watched the kindly meant but very unskilful treatment which Fred received during the next half-hour.

‘Oh! I say, Jack,’ he groaned at length, ‘this is too much. Don’t you know a fellow can’t stand having a thing like that poked at for a year at a time? Do bind it up with something.’

‘But it’s full of sand and gravel, Vickars. I know it ought to be washed out, and I’m trying to be as gentle as I can. If it should heal over with this sand in it, it would give you no end of trouble.’

‘Go ahead, then,’ said Fred, setting his teeth together.

And Jack went on, until all the sand was washed from the ugly wound. Poor Vickars’ face grew white beneath the operation, and great beads stood out all over his drawn forehead; but he did not utter another word of complaint.

‘Now it ought to have linen over it; I know that much. Poor fellow, you look like a ghost. Have you a linen shirt that I could tear the tail off?’

‘No. Wouldn’t a shirt bosom do, with the tucks pulled out?’

‘No; the starch might stick into you. Bert wears linen night-shirts, but then we can’t tell him. Oh, by

the way, Ned has on a shirt of his. I heard Bert tell him last night, when he came in here, that he had put on the wrong shirt; and Ned wouldn't take it off. Ned!'—and he bent down over the still sleeping boy,—  
'Ned!'

'Well?' said Edward, in a hoarse, sleepy voice. And then he sprang up suddenly in startled expectation.

'Don't be scared. I only want your shirt. Get up and give it to me, there's a good fellow. Fred is in an awful fix with his leg. Give us your shirt to tie him up with.'

The request was by no means a very lucid one to be addressed to a half-awakened sleeper; but Jack explained it by beginning to help him out of the garment in question with a celerity which showed that, as a physician, he felt that everything must be sacrificed to the good of his patient.

'There you are,' he said, tossing Ned's clothes to him, as he went across the room toward Fred with the shirt in his hand. 'By the way, how are you this morning, Samson? All right?'

'Pretty fair. I've laid in a cold, or something,' said Ned, in a very hoarse voice. 'What are you doing?' For Jack, with the help of Fred and his knife, was making long narrow strips of the shirt in an amazingly rapid manner.

'Doctoring Vickars. He's in a bad way here. Didn't you hear me say so?'

'Oh, yes, so I did; but I was thinking of Mr. Spencer. What are we going to do, boys?'

'Just nothing at all,' said Fred. 'You caught a bad cold on our ride yesterday; I sprained my foot when I stumbled on the rocks at the Cream-pot; and somebody

stole Brown Bessie in the night, and was run away with. I expect that she has been found, and that Mr. Spencer has been sent for, for he has gone out in a great hurry. Only act naturally, and put a good face on it, and we'll be safe enough. It will only be for to-day, you know. We are to go to the Cape to-night, fortunately.'

It required no amount of persuasion from Fred to induce Ned to promise not to confess his part in last night's mischief. The events of the past few hours had totally unnerved him; and he dreaded, even more than did his companions, the discovery of their wrong-doing. As to meeting Mr. Spencer, even as things now stood, he looked forward to the ordeal almost with terror; and when at length both surgeon and unhappy patient were ready to go to breakfast, he left them, and went into his own room to go down as usual with Bertram, lest any one should suspect that they had spent the night in company. Conscience had made a wretched coward of the boy.

Not quite certain how his brother might meet him after the fracas of the past night, he put on a little air of carelessness and indifference as he went into the room, ready to meet any advances toward reconciliation, but determined not to be the first to offer them. Bertram met him on his own ground. He had had a hard struggle with himself that morning. It was no easy matter to bear what he had borne the night before, and then meet as friends those who had injured him; and perhaps the fact that he felt himself much to blame did not contribute toward the shortening of the conflict. But Bertram Morton's Master was as strong as the boy was weak, and it needed but a touch of His loving hand to give him strength to struggle with his anger and his pride.

'Well,' he said, as Ned entered the room, and bade him good-morning, 'I suppose that we had better go down at once. Are you ready?'

'Yes, I will be in a moment.'

'Why, how hoarse you are! You have taken a heavy cold.'

'Yes, I feel very hoarse. . But that is nothing; I shall be all right in a little while. Fred is quite lame this morning.'

'What is the trouble with him?'

'He has sprained his ankle. You know he fell on the rocks yesterday.'

Bertram looked at his brother inquiringly; but Ned's face was turned from him, and he could see nothing to explain the constrained manner in which he spoke.

'Is anything the matter, Ned?'

'No. What do you mean?'

'We are friends, aren't we?' and Bertram laid his hand upon his brother's shoulder. 'Ned, it would break my heart to have trouble rise between us.'

'Oh, pshaw!' exclaimed Ned, sharply.

But as he turned toward Bertram, something in his face told him the truth. He could easily imagine how severe must have been the conflict which had ended in this quiet meeting between them, and his heart smote him.

'Don't look so sober, Bert. I'm sorry I was so ugly last night. There, now, don't you try to lord it over me any more, and we'll be all right. I know I was hateful last night, and I'm sorry. You'll forgive a fellow, won't you?'

He was sure of his pardon before he asked it, and the brothers went down to breakfast happy as two

young birds in their reconciliation ; but the younger carried a secret load which would not suffer any one thought to give him more than momentary ease.

Fred and Jack had gone down a little before them, Ned having taken care to let them do so, for he dared not be the first to meet Mr. Spencer. When the two brothers entered the breakfast-room, where the family were gathered, Bertram saw at a glance that something was wrong. Mrs. Spencer and Josie had been crying, and the little girls were both seated upon their mother's lap, with their faces hidden in her bosom, sobbing bitterly.

'We have had a great loss,' said Mrs. Spencer, as Bertram and Ned paused in the doorway. 'Brown Bessie was stolen from the stable last night, and we suppose that she must have run away with the thief. She was found out on the road at some distance from here this morning, so frightfully injured that Mr. Spencer was forced to shoot her to put her out of her agony.'

'And you have no clue to the thief?' asked Bertram.

'None at all. A teamster coming in to town found the poor creature lying in the road, with both fore-legs broken, and so entangled in the harness and shattered waggon that he could do nothing for her without help. So he came up at once for Mr. Spencer ; and when my husband attempted to extricate her, he found that the broken shaft had pierced her neck, and that nothing could be done for her. The teamster offered to put an end to poor Bessie's misery ; but Mr. Spencer did not know whether he could trust him, and he did it himself. It has made him almost ill. He cannot speak of her with anything like composure.'

There was very little breakfast eaten that morning. The children would not even come to the table, but lay



in a corner of the sofa, with their arms about each other's necks, crying softly, afraid of being banished to the nursery if they made a noise. Mr. Spencer sat in his place, looking very grave and pale, trying with poor success to keep up a semblance of conversation, and playing idly with the spoon in his coffee; and the rest of the company were scarcely more talkative or more hungry. Fred's sprained ankle and Ned's cold were brought to the rescue as topics of conversation; but all efforts failed to make the morning meal assume its customary sociability and enjoyment.

'Untle Fwank is here,' said May, coming slowly into the room just after the family had left the table, having been out upon the piazza with Lily. 'He wants my boy to go to Halifax wiz him. He's going to ride all day and all night, and have a deadful time.'

'There is a pleasant invitation for you, Jack,' said Mr. Spencer, as the mournful little voice ceased speaking, turning to Jack, who was so often claimed as May's boy that no one doubted whom she intended to designate. 'What do you mean, birdie? Is Uncle Frank here?'

'Yes, he's out at the door in his waggon, and he wants to see my Jack.'

May's story proved to be nearly correct. Mr. Frank Spencer, her father's brother, had received a telegram requiring his presence in Halifax; and he had called to see if Jack would like to accompany him. Jack accepted the invitation with delight; but the next moment he recollected that this would be leaving his companions to fight their way through their difficulties unaided and alone, and he turned toward Fred, who stood near him, leaning against a pillar.

'Go ahead. It is the best thing in the world for us.

Don't hesitate a minute,' whispered Fred; and taking him at his word, without at all understanding why the new project should aid their cause, the thoughtless boy, always carried away by the last new plan for pleasure, gave his glad consent.

'How long do you mean to keep this boy, Frank?' asked Mr. Spencer, as Jack was bidding his farewells, having hastily put together a few necessary articles for the journey.

'Until Saturday evening. Driggs sent me a telegram last night, to say that if I wished him to attend to that business in London for him, I must telegraph back what I wanted done, as he leaves Liverpool at sunrise to-morrow morning. It is utterly impossible for me to let him know the bearings of the case by a telegram, so I must go on and see him, unless I want to lose two thousand pounds, which, on the whole, I prefer to keep. I have sent on for relays, and think I can reach there by ten or twelve o'clock to-night without much trouble. After I have seen Driggs, we will take our own time for the forty miles' drive to Bridgewater, pass Wednesday night there, and go on to Halifax by coach in the morning. We shall spend Thursday night in Halifax, leave there by rail to Annapolis on Friday morning, and drive over from Annapolis on Saturday. There is our week's work, Jack,—one complete rush. How do you like the prospect?'

'Oh, I think it is grand, sir,' said Jack. 'I can't tell you how much I thank you for thinking of taking me with you.'

'I thought it would be such a fine opportunity for you to see the country, that it would be a pity that one of you should not enjoy it. I only wish that I could

take you all. Now we must say good bye, for we have not a moment to spare.'

'You will probably ride faster to-day than you ever rode in your life before,' said Mr. Spencer, as they drove rapidly down the road. 'We must change horses every twelve miles, so that we can go at full speed, or we shall not be able to make our time. I suppose you like to drive fast.'

'Yes, sir, I do,' said Jack, with a sickening thought, however, of his last ride; and he was almost thankful enough to have spoken his gratitude aloud when his companion turned the horses' heads, and he found that they were not to travel over the road which had been the scene of his last night's adventure.

'That was a terrible thing about poor Bessie, wasn't it?' said Mr. Spencer. 'It has made Herbert look really ill.'

'Yes, it was awful,' replied Jack. 'I can't bear to think about it;' and he shuddered as he spoke, and then grew so silent, that Mr. Spencer took care not to allude to the subject again during the day.

### XIII.

#### ALONE FOR THE RIGHT.

THE sound of the retreating wheels had scarcely died away down the road, when Archie rushed into the house, in a manner very much at variance with his usual sedate bearing, all excitement and distress with the news which he had just heard.

‘Is this true, Mr. Spencer?’ he said, pausing breathless at the door where that gentleman stood. ‘They tell me that Brown Bessie is dead.’

‘It is only too true, my boy,’ said Mr. Spencer, gravely. ‘Poor Bessie was stolen from the stable last night, and—But you have heard the story, I presume;’ and he turned hastily into the house, without attempting any further explanation.

‘Mr. Spencer can scarcely speak of this thing at all,’ said Fred, who, with Bertram and Ned, was still upon the piazza. ‘He told me just now that he threw his handkerchief over Bessie’s face before he shot her, for fear that she should open her eyes and look at him. He said that he could not possibly have done it if she had fixed her eyes on him.’

‘They told me in town that he had shot her himself,’ said Archie, ‘but I thought that it must have been a mistake. Is there no trace whatever of the thief?’

‘None at all,’ said Fred. ‘Nothing is known except that the horse was found on the road with the broken

waggon, so much injured that nothing could be done for her.'

Bertram had been looking full into Fred's face all the time that he had been speaking, having purposely refrained from answering any of Archie's questions; and now Fred turned toward him, and returned his gaze so quietly that Bertram started, half guiltily. Was it possible that the tormenting suspicions which had been filling his mind and heart since he had heard this sad story were a cruel injustice after all?

He would tell Archie all he knew, and see what he thought of it.

'Boys,' said Josie, coming out upon the piazza at that moment, 'who will go over to Mrs. Fraser's with that necktie this morning? Do any of you feel like taking the ride?'

'I believe that I am under bonds to perform that errand,' said Archie, 'and so is Jack. But Bert can go in his place; can't you, Bert?'

'Yes,' said Bertram, glad of so favourable an opportunity for a private conversation with Archie. 'I will be very glad to go.'

'Then I will order the horses right away if you are ready, for I want you to be back in time for dinner.'

'We are ready at any time,' said Archie; and Josie left them to send the order to the stable.

'You don't look up to much this morning, Ned,' said Archie, walking over to where Ned sat, leaning his head against the wall.

'He has taken cold,' said Fred, before Ned could speak. 'He's as hoarse as a bull-frog.'

'But he looks sort of pulled down, and weakish, as he used to do at home. You mustn't begin with that sort

of thing here, old Samson ; it won't do. Why don't you go up-stairs, and take a dose of that stuff that used to put the bones into your legs before !'

'I just will,' said Ned, rising from his chair at once ; for the truth was, he felt so wretchedly from the effects of his accident that he began to fear that it would be discovered that his lassitude proceeded from something different from a cold.

Bertram watched him as he entered the house with a slow, lagging step ; and a moment after he followed him to their room.

'Ned,' he said, the instant that he had closed the door, 'had your frolic last night anything to do with Brown Bessie ?'

The spoon in Ned's hand rattled against the bottle he held, and for an instant he did not answer. Then he said, angrily,

'What do you mean by asking me such a question as that ?'

'I mean this,' said Bertram, looking into the flushed face now turned toward him with an anxious, questioning gaze, 'that I know that Vickars and Jack led you into some serious piece of mischief, and that I am terribly afraid that you were in some way concerned in this thing. Don't try to deceive me, Ned. If it is so, it is better to confess it at once. Do stand up like a man, and tell the truth. Had you anything at all to do with this ?'

'No,' said Ned, sharply.

But he turned his face away, and his hand shook so violently that the liquid with which he was trying to fill the spoon poured in a stream upon the floor. No wonder ; for that was the first lie the boy's lips had ever

spoken, and his whole frame was throbbing with shame and self-contempt.

Without another word, Bertram opened the door, and ran down the stairs, answering a call from Archie as he went, for the horses were already at the door.

'You can't think, Bertram,' said Archie, as they rode away, bearing with them a blue necktie of the exact shade and material of that which had so taken Mrs. Fraser's fancy, 'what an excitement this affair has made in the town. It seems that horse-stealing is an enormity perfectly unheard of in this honest old place, where, as we have seen, windows and doors are left open with impunity. Everybody was talking of it as I came down from Sam Temple's; and I heard two or three people say that they could not believe that the man meant to steal the horse, but simply to put her on her paces, and then bring her back, but found that she proved too much for him, and ran away.'

'That is just what I am afraid of,' said Bertram, so seriously that Archie looked at him in amazed wonder. 'And, Archie, I am terribly anxious lest our boys are in some way mixed up in this thing, if they have not actually borne a hand in it.'

'Bertram Morton!'

Archie had wheeled his horse, reining him in so suddenly as almost to throw him upon his haunches, and now sat facing Bertram with an expression of mixed distress and indignation upon his face.

'You can't hate to suspect them more than I do,' said Bertram, slowly; 'but I am driven to it. Loose your rein, Archie; you are cutting Pedro's mouth. Ride along, and I will tell you what I know.'

Archie loosened the rein on his dancing horse, who,

by no means accustomed to such forcible dealings, was remonstrating against them in the usual manner of an impatient equine ; and Bertram told him his reasons for his suspicions. But, to his surprise, Archie did not see them at all in the same light in which they appeared to him, and was hotly indignant with his view of the case.

‘And do you mean to say, Bertram,’ he exclaimed, as his cousin concluded, ‘that because these three fellows have been so much together, and have had secrets from us, and got up some kind of a frolic last night, that they are mixed up in this mean business ? As for Ned’s angry answer to your question, and his trembling, and so forth, that’s all natural enough. The poor fellow has one of his weak turns this morning, and of course he was upset by such an accusation. I’d like to know how you would have taken such a thing yourself. And Jack too ! I tell you it’s bad enough to throw such a doubt on Fred Vickars ; but when it comes to our Jack, that’s just something I won’t stand. Do you know what you’re calling him ? A regular thief, and nothing short of it.’

Quiet Archie Sheldon was very seldom roused to anything like passion, but now he looked the impersonation of scorn and anger ; and yet Bertram did not falter.

‘I have not said one word against Jack that does not cast its shadow on Ned as well,’ he said, gravely ; ‘and the honour of my brother is at least as dear to me as that of your brother is to you. Do you think it has cost me nothing’—and the strong voice trembled as he spoke—‘to say all this ? Do you think it was no pain to me to cease to fight against these suspicions ?’

‘Well, Bert, they are suspicions, and nothing more,’ said Archie, somewhat mollified by Bertram’s tone, but quite unconvinced ; ‘and I think it’s an insult to all



these fellows to accuse them of such an abominable piece of wickedness without any better proof against them. And such a breach as it would be of even decent manners, let alone courtesy, to do such a thing to Mr. Spencer, of all men ! Bert, Bert, don't let your bad feeling toward Fred warp your judgment. I cannot and will not think such a thing of either of our boys.'

'Archie,'—and Bertram's tone showed plainly with what an effort he spoke,—'we must dare to face this thing. My brother is as dear to me as yours is to you ; his fair fame is as precious to me as Jack's is to you ; and, if this mean trick is traced home to them, my grief will certainly be no less than yours. Nevertheless, although I know that you think I am wrongly influenced by unfriendly motives, I feel that I must do all in my power to find out the truth. It is not only that justice to Mr. Spencer demands it ; I heard suspicion thrown upon another person this morning. Mr. Spencer told his wife in my hearing, not knowing, I suppose, that I was so near, that he had met French Paul in the street, and that his manner had been so strange when he spoke to him of Bessie that he feared he had been in some way an accomplice in the affair. What if he were really brought up for it, when our boys were the offenders ?'

'And do you think it possible, even allowing your unworthy suspicions to be true, that Jack would let any one else suffer for his sin ?' exclaimed Archie, all anger and indignation again. 'Bert, you are too bad ! I never would have thought this of you.'

'Then you will not use your influence with Jack to induce him to tell you whether he has been concerned in this ?'

‘No, I will not. I should be ashamed to suggest such a thing to him. I wouldn’t dare to do it.’

‘We must dare to do right,’ said Bertram, quietly, ‘even if it cost us the good-will of those whose love we most need. I shall not, of course, breathe a word of this to any one but you until the truth is forced upon me, or I am, to my infinite joy, relieved from my fears ; but I cannot let things rest as they are now. I must try to learn the facts ; and if I succeed, and find that my suspicions are well founded, then I must do my all to persuade the boys to confess what they have done.’

‘And suppose that you succeed in convincing yourself that you are right, and they refuse to confess, as you call it,—what then ? Shall you go to Mr. Spencer with your doubts and fears ?’

‘I—I don’t know. What ought I to do ? O Archie ! they never would put me to such a test as that. Neither Jack nor Ned would stoop to such a thing.’

‘No, I don’t think they would,’ said Archie, too angry to notice the pain in Bertram’s voice ; ‘but I didn’t know what you might think. Your opinion of them don’t seem to be remarkably exalted.’

Bertram did not reply, and the remainder of the ride was taken almost in silence. Each was busy with his own thoughts, however ; and neither looked particularly happy when they arrived at Mrs. Fraser’s gate. Archie was vexed with himself for having been so angry, but did not choose to own it, still thinking his cousin severe and unjust ; while Bertram felt as if the whole world were against him, when even calm, sober Archie took the other side, and he stood up alone and unaided in his struggle for the maintenance of good faith between their little party and the kind friends

who had done so much for their comfort and enjoyment.

'Well, now, and here you are at last,' said the cheery voice of Mrs. Fraser, as she came across a field near the house, rake in hand, with her welcome shining in her eyes and in her pleasant smile. 'I'm glad to see you, and that's the truth. But where is Willie's friend?'

'My brother Jack?' asked Archie. 'He ran off to Halifax at a moment's notice this morning; and as we are to go down to the Cape this afternoon, we could not wait for him.'

'Oh, yes, so I heard;' and Mrs. Fraser's bright face clouded a little. 'French Paul was here just now, and he told me.'

She looked sharply at the two boys as she spoke, as if she thought that that piece of information might affect them in some way; and when neither showed any particular interest in the matter, she moved forward, and said in an under-tone, as if afraid of being overheard,—

'I'll just speak out my mind, as we're alone here, young folks, for this visit of Paul's has frustrated me altogether. Have any of you lost any money?'

'No,' answered both the boys in the same breath.

'Nor either of the rest of your company?'

'No, not that we know of.'

'Well, then, maybe I've done the poor drone a wrong. The thing is just this. He's been owin' me a matter of ten dollars for a year or more, and lately I've been a little sharp on him about it; for I didn't see any good reason why a lone woman should be kept out of her own for the sake of a great strapping man that could as well pay his honest debts as no, if he only chose to earn

the money. I'm willin' and glad to work my finger-ends off for my own as can't do a hand's turn for themselves ; but when it comes to doin' for lazy Paul, that's another thing. So I ups and tells him last week, pretty snappin' and serious-like too, that if he didn't set to work, and pay me my money, I'd get the law on him. Well, Paul he got kind of scared ; and the first thing I knows, out he comes this forenoon with a ten-dollar bill, and hands it right over to me.'

She paused in her rapid recital, and stood leaning on her rake, with the same sharp look of inquiry which she had directed to her hearers before.

'Well?' said Archie.

'Well, I knowed as Paul hadn't never earned ten dollars since I last hectored him about my money,—never in this wide world ; and I was bothered then. And when I see it wasn't no provincial money, but one of Uncle Sam's own notes, and as clean and crisp as if it had just come out of the mint, I tell you I near sank, I was that scared. "Paul," says I, "where did you get this money?" says I, talkin' very loud and pointin' at it, and shakin' my head, all to make him understand. He understood quick enough, but I couldn't get nothin' out of him. He just said a few words in that outlandish gibberish which those folks will persist in instead of talkin' decent English like other people ; and the wonder to me is how one of 'em ever knows what another is sayin'—and the very children, the smart little witches, all understand it too ; and away he went, without even waitin' for a line of a receipt from me. But see what I found when I came to turn the note over. The minute I see this, I made sure that one of you young folks was the poorer by ten dollars.'

She took from her pocket a well-worn wallet, and drawing from it a new bank-note, showed them a name written upon the back. Every vestige of colour left Archie's face as the words 'Jack Raymond Sheldon' danced before his eyes.

'Has your brother lost no money?' asked Mrs. Fraser, noticing the start with which he had caught sight of the clearly written name.

'He has not spoken of it—not to me, at least;' and he glanced inquiringly at Bertram.

'Nor to me,' said Bertram.

'What had we best do?' asked Archie, with an appealing look which surprised Mrs. Fraser, but which his cousin fully understood.

'I think that we had better exchange this bill for another with Mrs. Fraser, if she makes no objection, and return at once to Mr. Spencer's. The other boys may know something of this. May we keep it, Mrs. Fraser?'

'Certain you may. No, no, I don't want that,' as Bertram handed her another note in its place. 'Do you suppose I wouldn't trust you? Well,' for the boy had thrust the money into her hand, 'just as you like, but I'd as lief have it with any of you as in the bank. You don't say you're goin' right off?'

'We must, Mrs. Fraser,' said Archie, who had thrown himself upon his horse, and thus elicited the astonished exclamation. 'I want to find out the truth of this mystery at once; but I think it would be quite as well not to speak of it to any one else until the matter is cleared up.'

'Oh; no, sir! It would be a mortal shame to hurt the poor man's good name for naught. Paul's the laziest

fellow the sun ever shone on, but I never heard of his touching a pennyworth as wasn't his own before. I'll not whisper a word of it, not even to Joseph. Oh, dear me, talkin' of all this, I clean forgot about poor little Bessie. Did ever you hear anything like that in all your days? Why, we never knew of such a thing here before, and our hairs is all upon end; and how hard Mr. Spencer must take it, and Miss Josie! They're like to break their hearts, no doubt, and they all so fond of her; and he'd never let nobody cross her back but just himself.'

'It was a shameful thing,' said Bertram, slowly.

'Shameful indeed, and them so good to everybody! Indeed, I can't think it was any Yarmouth folk as done it, but some stranger man, and one as didn't know much of the Spencers neither,—they with their hands always open to all! Oh, by the way, perhaps you might have my tie along; but of course you wouldn't, and Miss Josie so frustrated this morning, and that so unnecessary to be sure, only very pretty and becomin' for a black alapaca.'

'Oh, yes! we have it here,' said Archie. 'I had almost forgotten it. Now we must say good-bye, Mrs. Fraser.'

'Good-bye, good-bye! I hope you won't find nothin' unpleasant for poor Paul; and Willie, too, will be awful disappointed not to see you. Come again any time you're up to town. Respects to all Mr. Spencer's folks and the young gentlemen, and sorry as can be for his trouble with Brown Bess. Good-bye.'

## XIV.

### THE MARKED NOTE.

THE two boys had almost reached home before the silence which had reigned between them was broken by more than a passing word. More than once Bertram had spoken to his cousin, but Archie had answered his remarks in such an absorbed, preoccupied manner, and with so little apparent interest in what he said, that Bertram had concluded to let his thoughts have their way.

Deliberate Archie could never alter his decision on any point in a hurry. His mind was always slow in forming a judgment upon any matter ; but, once formed, that judgment was almost unalterable. He had been annoyed —no, more than that, he had been heartily indignant with Bertram's suspicions ; but, since he had 'met them with such an entire want of faith, he had seen that which had led him to doubt the wisdom of his own view of the case, and to make him fear that, after all, Bertram's idea was correct. The long, quiet ride was drawing near its end, when he turned toward his cousin, and, without a word of preface, said gravely,

'Bert, I am sorry that I spoke to you as I did, for I think you must be right. I gave that bill to Jack last evening.'

'Archie !' exclaimed Bertram, so surprised by this announcement that it almost seemed as if the thought had come to him for the first time.

‘Yes, I did,’ said Archie. ‘He has had some money dealings with Fred, and owed him five dollars, which he wanted to pay. Of course he was out of pocket, he always is, and he came to me for the money. I was giving him a little moral suasion about spending so much, thinking I rather had him, as I was lending him my money; and as he sat at the table, listening good-naturedly enough too, he wrote his name out on the bill. Taking this with Mr. Spencer’s suspicion of Paul’s manner, I am afraid that the boys must be mixed up in the matter; and yet, Bert,’ and Archie looked greatly distressed, ‘it cannot be that Jack would go off and leave the others in the lurch if it were so.’

‘There is Paul this moment. Let us put it right to him,’ said Bertram.

The man was standing at the side of the road, leaning against a fence, with his head bent on his hand, watching the motions of his foot as with the toe of his boot he slowly kicked to pieces the bit of turf before him. Engaged in this operation, he did not notice the approach of the riders until they were close upon him. Then he looked up, started visibly, and began to walk up the road at a pace quite in contrast with his usual lazy, lagging step. But Archie was not to be so easily put from his purpose. He rode up to his side, and, bending from the saddle, held out the bank-note before his startled face.

‘Where did you obtain this money?’ he asked, in Paul’s own language.

Poor Paul! he had been having a hard time of it that morning. He was an honest fellow; not for worlds would he have taken that note from Vickars without his knowledge; and now the thought had been gradually working itself into his dull, heavy mind, that the money was no



more rightfully his own than if he had done so. And then there was Mr. Spencer, who had always been a good friend to him. When he had met him in the early morning, he had not dared to look him in the face. At the very moment when the boys rode up, he was trying to make up his mind what he should do; and, remembering that the money which had purchased his silence was spent, and could not now be returned to the donors, was relapsing into despair, when another woe, in the guise of Archie Sheldon, came sweeping down upon his troubled spirit.

He looked up helplessly into the boy's face, knowing that he was suspected, and yet feeling bound by his promise to secrecy.

'Did my brother or Mr. Vickars give it to you?' asked Archie. 'I am determined to know the truth, and you may as well confess it first as last.'

But at that tone of command Paul's temper came to his aid, and violently declaring himself an honest man, he refused entirely to tell how he came into possession of the money. Of course Archie could not compromise the boys by alluding to his suspicions; and as, after the first outburst of temper, Paul sullenly refused to speak another word, the boys left him and proceeded on their way.

'The mystery seems to thicken,' said Bertram. 'What shall we do about it, Archie?'

'I shall go directly to Vickars with this bill,' replied Archie, 'and ask him to explain matters. If I judge from his manner and his story that Jack is concerned in this affair, I shall telegraph him at once. Can you think of any better plan?'

'No; but I should be as abrupt with Vickars as pos-

sible. He is very smart ; but I have often noticed, that if he is taken at unawares, he is slow to recover himself. If Paul has been paid to help them, or if he has discovered the project and been bought over to secrecy, Fred will probably show some sign of guilt when you put the very money paid to Paul before his eyes. I do wonder how it all is.'

Vickars was sitting on the piazza when, having left their horses at the stable, the boys walked up to the house.

'Well,' he said, 'have you had a good ride ; and is the old lady as deliberate of speech and as elegantly dressed as ever ?'

'Just about,' said Archie, carelessly, for it was to him that the remark was addressed. 'See here, Vickars ; who paid out that money to French Paul,—you or Jack ?'

Fred's cheeks paled visibly, as he looked quickly up into Archie's face, to try to read there how much or how little he knew. But Archie's face was a hard one to read. He stood waiting for the answer to his question, his firm mouth and steady eyes telling no tales, with the bank-note in his hand, the note that Fred recognised as that which he had given to Paul.

Vickars was, as Bertram had said, very slow to recover himself when suddenly brought into difficulty ; and to-day, suffering greatly with his wounded leg, and harassed by his fears of discovery, he was totally unequal to the situation. For a moment he sat there, unable to speak, looking at the note as if it were his death-warrant.

'What was it paid to him for ?' asked Archie, as if his first question had been answered.

'What do I know about it ?' replied Vickars, with a

great effort to speak carelessly. 'That is not my money. Don't you see Jack's name on it?'

'Yes, I do; but I gave this bill to Jack to pay to you.'

'Well, he didn't pay it, that's all.'

Archie gazed blankly for a moment into Vickars' face. Jack had told him that the money had been paid, had even given him the five dollars which he said Vickars had returned to him in change. Could it be possible that he had spoken a positive untruth?

'Vickars,' he said sternly, 'have a care what you say. This money came into French Paul's hands in no fair way; and we are sorely afraid, Bert and I, that it might tell us tales, if it could speak, which Paul dares not tell. Jack told me last night that he had given this money to you.'

'Then he lied,' said Fred, furiously. 'How dare you insult me? What do you mean to insinuate?'

'We *insinuate* nothing,' said Archie, quietly; 'but let me tell you one thing, Vickars. If Jack Sheldon has lied, he has done so for the first time in his life, and it is you who have led him on to it. I shall telegraph him this afternoon, and ask him to explain everything, unless you will save me that trouble.'

'Vickars,' Bertram had come forward, and was standing with his hand on the back of Fred's chair as he spoke,—'Vickars, if you boys have had anything to do with this business of Brown Bessie, do tell us, and let Mr. Spencer know. If you have been led into mischief, it is surely best to be honest about it. I can gain no satisfaction from Ned; and as Jack is gone, we must come to you. Do tell us what this all means. We will stand your friends in any way we can. Be brave and

true, Vickars, and we'll do our very best to help you all out of your scrape.'

'Thank you,' said Vickars, who had now quite recovered himself, looking contemptuously into Bertram's entreating face; 'but I am in no scrape. If your brother and Jack are in trouble, you had better offer your aid to them, although Jack seems to have taken an easy way out of any difficulty which may have threatened him.'

It had required an immense effort on Archie's part to restrain himself before; but this second insult to his brother was too much for him. With a sudden motion he seized Vickars by the collar, but Bertram threw himself between them.

'Stop!' he cried peremptorily. 'Archie, he's disabled;' and he pushed the boy's already loosened hand from Fred's neck. 'And besides, would you come to blows in a friend's house?'

Archie did not speak, but turning away he strode up and down the piazza, his whole frame pulsing and throbbing with intense excitement.

'Fred Vickars,' he said at length, pausing in his rapid walk, 'I have just this to say. We know that something is seriously wrong among you three boys. Ned is the youngest of you all; he is naturally timid, and is, moreover, weakened by long illness, and may be, for aught I know, bound over in some way to silence; at any rate, he will tell us nothing. Jack is away, gone (I am afraid thoughtlessly and carelessly) for a whole week; and it rests with you whether you will tell us what this trouble is, or whether I shall send to Jack. He will tell the truth; there is no mistake about that, notwithstanding your insolent sneers. Jack is foolishly, perhaps in this case he has been wickedly, careless and

headstrong ; but he is true as steel when he takes time to think, and he will tell the whole truth, whatever it costs him. Shall I send to him ?'

'Just as you please ; I have nothing to do with it,' said Vickers. 'I should think,' he added, with a short laugh, 'that any one with a grain of sense might know (unless you are quite determined to drag me into this thing) that a fellow with a sprained foot could scarcely have been engaged in any such performance as you seem to hint at.'

'Perhaps the fellow's sprained foot may be connected with the performance,' said Bertram, looking steadily at him.

For the second time the colour faded from Vickers' face, but he answered only by a disagreeable laugh ; and the two boys went into the house, quite certain now that poor Bessie's death was in some way attributable to their own party.

'Well, boys, how did your errand speed ?' asked Mrs. Spencer, meeting them at the head of the stairs as they went up to their rooms. 'Was Mrs. Fraser delighted with her "bonnie blue riband" ?'

'Yes, ma'am ; and very much obliged to Miss Josie for having taken the trouble to send it to her.'

'Trouble of which I should say you took the lion's share,' said Josie, who had followed her mother. 'By the way, Captain Rankin has been here to say that he should not go across until sunset. As the tide will be much better for you at that time, he thinks that it will be best to wait until then. So we shall have you with us a few hours longer. You both looked tired ; you should have rested a little at Mrs. Fraser's.'

'Oh ! we are not tired,' said Bertram, cheerfully.

‘We are going to our rooms to put up some traps that we shall need at the Cape. Is Ned there? We have not seen him since we came in.’

‘Yes; he is lying asleep on the bed. Don’t look so frightened; he is not sick, but he was very hoarse, and looked so tired that mother coaxed him to take a hot lemonade, and lie down a while. We do not mean to let him go over to the Cape with you to-night; his cold is too bad. Mother thinks that we have trusted too much to his bright looks. We have let him do too much, and have not taken the care of him that we should have done. So we mean to keep him a few days longer if he will stay, and let him get thoroughly rested before he goes to the Point.’

‘I hardly know about that,’ said Bertram, with a little laugh. ‘We have never slept apart but once in our lives, and that was last night: he went into the boys’ room.’

‘On a frolic, eh? Well, you must let us have him to-night, at least, for his cold must not be neglected.’

Bertram smiled, but he shook his head as he went away to his room, thinking it very unlikely that Ned would consent to any such arrangement.

## XV.

### LIGHT BEHIND THE CLOUD.

‘So Captain Rankin means to carry you off to the Point this evening, eh?’ said Mr. Spencer, as Bertram took his seat beside him at the dinner table. ‘I wish that you were to remain here altogether. Why, where are the rest of the boys? It seems to me that we have a very small representation. Who is missing? Fred and Edward.’

‘Ned is up-stairs, Mr. Spencer. Miss Josie persuaded him to lie down this morning, as he did not seem as well as usual, and he fell asleep. She gave me orders not to wake him, so I obeyed. Fred was in his room not very long ago, packing his valise for the Cape; but he came down before we did, and I have not seen him since.’

‘Has no one seen him?’ asked Mr. Spencer. ‘He must be somewhere about the house, for that foot of his will not let him travel far. He certainly ought not to go over to the Point while he is so lame. Can you not induce him to stay, and let you doctor it for him, Anna?’

‘I have been trying all day to coax him to remain, and to persuade him to let me see the foot, but without any success. He makes very light of it, but I am sure that he is suffering a great deal. I am afraid that it will prove a serious matter if he does not take care of it; a bad sprain is no trifle.’

The waitress was sent to look for the missing boy;

but she returned after a few moments' absence, reporting that he was not to be found.

'He must have gone out somewhere,' said Mr. Spencer. 'Have something kept hot for him, Anna. He will probably be back soon. He did not tell any one where he was going, I suppose?'

'He said nothing to us, sir,' replied Archie, as Mr. Spencer turned toward him as if for an answer; but he wondered in his own mind whether Vickars might not, in spite of his lameness, have gone in search of French Paul, to try to learn from him by what means the boys had become possessed of the bank-note which he had given him.

Dinner was over, although the meal was a protracted one at Mr. Spencer's, no one caring to be the first to disturb the pleasant hour of easy chat and enjoyment; and still Fred had not come.

'I wonder if anything can have happened to the boy,' said Mrs. Spencer uneasily. 'If he has been foolish enough to go out for a walk, he may have become disabled all at once, and be unable to reach home. I really think, Herbert, that you had better go out and look around a little for him.'

'Perhaps I had,' said her husband. 'There is Rankin passing the gate now. He may have seen him, for he has just come up from town, I know. He went down to the wharf to see the "Vulture" off. Rankin!'

The captain paused in his rolling walk, and, touching his hat to Mrs. Spencer, who stood in the doorway, waited to hear what the gentleman had to say. 'Have you seen anything of young Vickars as you came up?'

'As I came up, sir? Why, I saw him off,' said the old sailor, with some surprise in his tone.



'Off where?' asked Mr. Spencer.

'Off in the "Vulture," to be sure, sir. Where else? But surely, sir,' he added, seeing the look of blank astonishment with which his listeners (Bertram and Archie having been added to the number) heard his announcement, 'surely you knew he'd sailed for Boston in the "Vulture" this afternoon?'

'Why, Rankin, it is not possible. I don't understand you. The boy was here not more than two hours ago.'

'Well, he's on the "Vulture" now, sir, just as sure as my name is Josiah Rankin, for I see him there with my own eyes. He come aboard as I left, just as they hove anchor, as hurried and hasty as could be, tellin' me as I met him that he had been sent for home in a tearin' hurry, and must go right off in the packet. But he never said as you didn't know it. Could he have got a letter or somethin', and not had time to come back to tell you?'

'That might be,' said Mr. Spencer, anxiously. 'But in that case he would certainly have sent a message through you to me.'

'He didn't have no time for that, sir. As I said, they was a heavin' the anchor as I saw him, and we hadn't time for more than a passin' word. I called out to him from the wharf that I was sorry he'd missed his visit to the P'int, but I hadn't time to tell him so aboard. Like enough he's left some word at the post-office, if it was there he got his orders home. But then—why, he had his valise along, Mr. Spencer. How come that?'

'Perhaps he took it in his hand to leave at your boat, captain, as he was going down,' suggested Bertram. 'Shall Archie and I walk down to the post-office, Mr. Spencer, and see if he has left any word for you? We

‘want to go down before we leave this afternoon, and we may as well go at once.’

‘I should be much obliged if you would, for it must be something of imperative importance that would take him off in this way. I feel exceedingly uneasy.’

‘Bert, we have frightened that fellow off,’ said Archie, as they walked rapidly away on their errand. ‘He is afraid that Jack will tell all in answer to a message from me, I suppose. He has actually run away.’

‘What message did you mean to send?’

‘I had meant to send him word that Paul was suspected, and ask him what I should do; for Mr. Spencer told me before dinner that he was quite certain Paul knew something about the matter. He had taxed him with having had a hand in it, and the poor fellow had denied having touched the horse, and even having been near the stable, but would say nothing more. If they have bought his silence, Jack will never, never let him suffer. Oh, if he would only take time to think what he is about! Just imagine his getting into such a scrape, and then rushing off on a pleasure jaunt, and leaving things in this way. He might have known that everything depended on him.’

‘A telegram will meet him at Liverpool, I suppose,’ said Bertram, ‘and he will send a reply to-morrow morning. It seems hardly worth our while to go to the Cape this evening, for we must come back in the morning to receive the answer.’

‘Oh, we ought to go,’ said Archie; ‘we have disappointed the old man already. He comes or sends up every day, and we will tell him that we expect news of some importance to us. Here we are at the telegraph office.’

‘Paul in trouble. V. gone home without a word.  
What shall I do ?

ARCHIE.’

Faster than the galloping horses and the swiftly rolling wheels flew the little telegram across the country, over hill and dale, over leaping brook and sunny, fragrant field, and lay quietly down in the pretty town of Liverpool to await the coming of its owner.

The message sent, the boys went into the post-office, and found, as they expected, a note directed in Vickers’ hand to Mr. Spencer.

‘Now the mystery will be explained,’ said their host, as he took off the envelope, and then read aloud :

‘MY DEAR MR. SPENCER,—I have just received a letter from home, telling me of the serious illness of my sister. As father and mother are both away, I must go on at once. By leaving here instantly, I can catch the “Vulture” before she sails. With love and thanks to all your family,—Yours sincerely, F. VICKARS.’

‘I don’t know what to make of that exactly,’ said Mr. Spencer, looking curiously at the open letter. ‘I understood that his only sister was making a visit in Halifax.’

‘So I thought,’ said his wife. ‘And the boy is not fit to travel with that foot. It is very unfortunate.’

‘Very, indeed. I would not have had his visit end in this way on any consideration. Somehow, I can’t seem to feel satisfied with this explanation. He was not offended or irritated in any way, was he ?’

‘Certainly not. I was talking with him a little before the boys came home from Mrs. Fraser’s, and he was as

pleasant as possible. Oh, no, there was nothing wrong in that way. He will write again, and tell us all about it more at length. He has probably been startled by the sudden news, and has rushed right off, without thinking of anything but of reaching Boston as soon as possible. Probably his sister has returned there without our knowledge.'

To Bertram's surprise he found Ned still asleep on his return. It was now five o'clock, and he had been sleeping since shortly after one; but, suspecting that he had had little or no rest on the past night, Bertram readily acceded to Mrs. Spencer's wishes, and left the house with Archie for the Cape without disturbing him.

They had not been long gone, however, when Ned awoke, refreshed and invigorated, and went downstairs to apologize for his 'laziness,' as he termed it. Great was his surprise to find that the boys had departed without him, and greater still his astonishment and his consternation to hear that Fred had gone so suddenly and unexpectedly. But when, a little later, Mr. Spencer came in, and he found that French Paul was under suspicion, his very heart sank within him. Anger against Fred for leaving him thus to bear the brunt of the battle kept out every other thought for the moment; but then came the recollection of poor Paul. Faithful to his trust he must have been, for evidently no one in the house suspected the truth as yet. Then Bertram's urgent words flashed upon him,—'Stand up like a man and tell the truth.'

His face flushed and burned as he thought of the falsehood which he had spoken that morning—that one little 'no.' Oh, if he had only been brave and true at the first! Now he stood entirely alone. Had he the manliness and

the courage to do what was right,—to stand up in his place unaided, and confess it all ?

‘Come in,’ said Mr. Spencer, in answer to a knock upon the door of his private study, where he sat writing, early in the evening.

‘Ned ! what is the matter, my son ?’

The boy looked as if he would have fallen, he was so deadly white ; but he put aside the arm which Mr. Spencer had stretched out to support him.

‘I am not ill,’ he said, speaking very rapidly and earnestly ; ‘but I have come to tell you what I am afraid will make you sick at heart, Mr. Spencer. French Paul is not to blame, as you think, for the death of your horse in any way ; but I am.’

In a moment the truth, in part, broke upon Mr. Spencer’s mind. Weak, irresolute Edward Morton had never done this thing alone ; and there was that flight, and that unsatisfactory letter, on which his mind had been dwelling more or less ever since he received it. He was not wholly taken by surprise. That some mystery had been afloat in his house all day he had been quite sure, and his fears had pointed this way. Ned was amazed by the calmness with which he answered his confession.

‘And is Fred Vickers also to blame for it ?’ he said quietly.

‘Do not ask me any questions about any one else,’ said Ned, entreatingly. ‘For myself, I have only to say that I abused your hospitality and your kindness by disobeying your wishes ; and you know the end of my disobedience. But, more than that, I have been false to you and to Bertram. I don’t know what you will say to me—whether you will even let me stay in

your house after what I have done. I can only say that I am most heartily sorry, and wretchedly ashamed ;' and the excited boy dropped his head into his hands.

'Ned,' said Mr. Spencer, laying his hand upon his bowed head, 'did you drive Bessie out last night on the spur of the moment, or was the expedition a laid plan?'

'It was a laid plan, sir.'

'It was not your idea, was it? Were you not led into it?'

'I *went* into it, Mr. Spencer,' said the boy, lifting his face, and looking directly at his questioner. 'It would be no lightening of my fault to say that another drew me on. If he did, I was so much the more to blame for yielding, if I saw in the first place that it was wrong. I have no excuse to offer, sir. I sinned with my eyes wide open to what I was doing, and I have utterly disgraced myself.'

'No,' said Mr. Spencer, gently, 'not utterly, my boy. You have done a great wrong ; but no man who bravely confesses a sin of which he is not even suspected—who fights and wins, by God's good grace, the battle you have fought and won to-day—is utterly disgraced. We cannot bring poor Bessie back to life ; but if her death is used by our heavenly Father to show you how hopelessly weak we are, save when we stand in His strength, I shall count her loss a precious gain.'

Ned could not answer. He had braced himself to meet such a storm of anger as he had never seen ; and this was the result. If Mr. Spencer had ordered him to his room, telling him that he should send him home to his uncle by the steamer which sailed on the following day, it would only have been what he expected. But this kindness, these words of encouragement, over-

whelmed him. A little choking sound broke the silence which had followed Mr. Spencer's words ; and in another moment Ned's head was bent upon the table, and he was sobbing like a child.

It was late in the evening before they left that little study ; but they left it together,—the strong, helpful Christian man, and the weak, vacillating, repentant boy. The long hours had not been spent in vain. Earnest words of hope and faith and manly purpose, earnest prayers for strength, for help to lead a nobler life, and for courage to stand up bravely for the right, had been spoken there ; and Edward Morton came out of that room a changed boy.

The man had lost nothing in those hours, perhaps had gained no little in nearness and likeness to that Master in whose steps he was treading ; and the boy had grown (as souls sometimes do grow when led by a Christ-like hand which reaches down to their weakness, rich in the strength which comes by long years of Christian love and experience) not by gradual onward steps, but, by a leap out of the uncertain dimness in which he had hitherto groped, into the light in which he could see not his wants and weaknesses only, but the good that was in him as well,—the God-given weapons with which he might conquer every foe.

## XVI.

### WILLIAM SHELDON'S SON.

THE temporary cloud which had fallen over Jack's spirits on being reminded, by Mr. Frank Spencer's remark, of his share in the fatal accident which had befallen Brown Bessie did not remain there for any length of time. Possessing in a remarkable degree that elasticity of temperament which enables some persons to throw off disagreeable and even unhappy thoughts, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of the hour with a full abandonment, which made him a most lively and pleasant companion.

Ever since he had been in Yarmouth he had been delighted with the beautiful show of plants in the house windows, filled as they were from sill to coping with such geraniums and fuschias as he had never seen before, of enormous size, and a wealth and brilliancy of blossom which are seldom seen except in such a climate as that of Nova Scotia ; but this morning he was in an ecstasy over their loveliness. Then there were the roadside brooks, whose amber colour he had often noticed with admiration, flowing along flecked with white foam as they tumbled over some obstruction, roe fell in miniature waterfalls down a declivity in their bed, tossing and gurgling over every rock or stone in their path. Never had they looked so bright a colour ; never had the dashing foam been of so pure a whiteness, or formed so beautiful a contrast to the clear brown water. In fact, the



boy was fairly carried away with his enjoyment ; and the fleet horses, as they bore him rapidly from the scene of his wrong-doing, seemed to bear him quite as swiftly out of all thought and recollection of it.

On and on they sped, stopping only to change horses, and for a hurried dinner at a way-side inn. The twilight, which lingers so long over old Acadia, came down upon them, lighting them on their way for hours, and then sank away, leaving only the stars to watch over them. The night wore on, and even Jack's voluble tongue grew quiet in the solemn stillness of the lonely road. Ten o'clock, eleven, twelve,—and as the church clock struck midnight they drove into the pretty town of Liverpool, as tired a pair of travellers as ever stepped stiffly out of a carriage to stretch their weary limbs after sixteen hours of hard riding.

Glad enough was Jack to lay his head upon a soft pillow, too much fatigued to be anxious even when he was alone in his room. To be sure, he murmured sleepily to himself as his heavy eyelids closed, 'I wonder how those chaps are coming on ;' but the next instant he was fast asleep.

'Jack ! Jack !'

The boy started up, as a sudden rap upon his door, and the sound of his own name somewhat loudly called, wakened him, thinking that he had but just laid his head upon the pillow. But the sunlight was falling broadly in at the window ; and, as he sat up in bed, another rap fell on his door.

'Jack Sheldon !'

'Yes, sir ; I'm awake,' said Jack, now fully aroused.

'Shall I come in ? I have a telegram for you. You should have had it last night.'

A sickening fear struck home to Jack's heart. Had Ned been seriously injured after all? The misery of that one moment was punishment enough for all his wickedness and folly. In an instant he had torn open the paper, and he had almost cried out for joy when its contents met his terrified gaze :—

‘Paul in trouble. V. gone home without a word.  
What shall I do ?

ARCHIE’

‘Oh, thank God ! I thought it was Ned,’ he said with a choked voice, and sat down weakly, as if he had not strength to stand.

‘Is anything wrong, Jack ?’ asked Mr. Spencer. ‘It seems the telegram was sent here last night, directed to Mr. Driggs’ care ; but, not knowing that you were coming, and not recognising the name, he sent it back to the office, thinking that it might be called for. In the press of other business last night he forgot it.’

‘There is something wrong,’ said Jack, ‘but it is so much less than I feared that it seems like nothing. Yet it is serious enough too,’ he added, the shadow falling on his face again. ‘How soon could I possibly reach home, Mr. Spencer? Could I go back as we came, and arrive at Yarmouth to-night ?’

‘You could, possibly, but you ought not to do it. What is the trouble, my boy ? May I know ?’

Jack Sheldon never paused to consider. When Ned had made his confession, he had carefully concealed all but his own part in the evil which had been done ; but in two minutes after Mr. Spencer’s question had been asked, he knew the whole story from beginning to end, and Jack stood before him flushed, mortified, self-con-

demning, entreating him to send him home as rapidly as possible, that he might strive to undo as much of the mischief which he had done as could be remedied.

All yesterday's bright enjoyment had fled ; he could see nothing, talk of nothing, think of nothing, but his own wrong-doing, and was so excited and remorseful that Mr. Spencer, shocked as he was at his recital, and amazed at his carelessness of the preceding day, was fain to try to soothe and encourage him.

But nothing would satisfy him short of an immediate return to Yarmouth. To Mr. Spencer's proposition that he should despatch an answer to Archie's message, and then write a full explanation by letter, he would not listen for a moment. Fred had gone, he said, and Ned was there alone, the one of the three who was the least to blame in the matter ; and he could not leave him until Saturday night. He must start at once. In vain Mr. Spencer described the charms of the journey to and from Halifax,—the beautiful country ; the exciting stage ride up hill and down dale, at the topmost speed of the four strong horses, which were so often relieved that their pace never slackened ; how they rattled along the verge of precipices, never swerving from the road, and dashed through the little settlements without even pausing to take and deliver the mails, but flinging the bags down as they passed, at the same time snatching the returned bag from the limb of a tree on the road-side (where it always hung at the proper hour awaiting the mail-coach) without once drawing rein. Then there were the great tides at Windsor to be seen, with their rise and fall of ninety feet ; and beautiful St. Mary's Bay. When would he ever have an opportunity to see all this again?

But it was of no use. Jack could think of nothing but his own shameful thoughtlessness in coming away at all under such circumstances, and was overwhelmed with distress lest his kind host should think that he had fled, as he feared Fred had done, in dread of discovery. Standing alone now, without Vickars at his side to ply him with false motives and excuses, he saw his own fault, too, in all its glaring colours ; and nothing would do but that he should tell the whole story to the man whom he had so injured, and take the consequences, whatever they might be.

So when Archie and Bertram arrived at Mr. Spencer's house in the morning, having easily satisfied the captain, who could not but see that something was troubling his young guests, that it was necessary that they should go into town, they found their expected message waiting for them.

'Paul is innocent. I will explain all to-morrow morning.'

'I knew it ! I knew he'd come right back,' said Archie quietly, but with a depth of satisfaction in his voice which told what a relief those few words had brought him ; and then he went to find Mr. Spencer, to tell him what he had done, and what the result had been ; while Bertram's first errand was to seek Ned, and learn whether he were well or ill.

A long, long story the boy had to tell, but Bertram heard in his every tone the strength and the force of purpose which had come to him in these few past hours ; and, much though there was of pain and grief for both in that recital, the brothers went down-stairs together, when it was told, with hearts more closely knit than

wicked as I could be since I've been here ; but I could not—I really could not—run away ! I am William Sheldon's son yet,' he added, looking up with his pleading eyes into Mr. Spencer's face.

'Yes,' said Mr. Spencer, kindly, but very seriously, 'I see that you are. Your readiness to own your fault, your brave defence of your cousin, your silence with regard to another, who, I cannot but think, has probably been the originator of this mischief, all tell me that your father's love of truth, and his straightforward honesty, have descended to his son. And yet, Jack, I tremble lest your wild love of pleasure for mere pleasure's sake, your thoughtless throwing aside of every consideration for yourself or for your friends, your careless sacrifice of even the real interest of others for your own enjoyment, may lead you on to some act which shall disgrace and dishonour your father's good name.'

'Oh, Mr. Spencer !' and Jack's face was so full of distress, that had not his friend felt very strongly the danger in which he stood, he would have been almost tempted to soften those last words. But, instead of doing so, he said in the same grave tone,

'Suppose, Jack, that Bessie had belonged to some man who was a stranger to you. You would scarcely have been less likely, if the desire to drive her had seized you, to deny yourself the pleasure because he was not your friend, would you ?'

How the rich colour flushed and mantled over the boy's face and neck, as, lifting up his eyes again, he said in a low tone,

'I hope not, sir.'

'Then let us suppose that Bessie suffered by your hand as she did suffer on Monday night, and that her owner

punished you, in his anger, to the full extent of the law; where would you have been now, and by what name would men have called William Sheldon's son?

The boy did not raise his face in answer to this question. He neither spoke nor moved, except to pass his hand once or twice across his brow, which flushed and paled, and flushed and paled again, as he sat there, overcome by the sudden consciousness of the real deed of which he had been guilty.

For a while Mr. Spencer was as silent as Jack, sitting opposite him apparently lost in thought. But after a little he rose from his seat, and, bending over the boy's chair, he put his hand upon his head, and turned the downcast, humbled face toward his own.

'My boy,' he said gently, 'I do not want to be hard upon you; I want to help you. I have stood where you stand now, just trembling on the verge of a precipice. I struggled back, by God's help, to peace and safety; but it was a hard struggle, for I had no human hand to aid me. I know how it is with you,'—and the strong hand stroking the curly head might have been a child's for the tenderness of its touch,—'for I have felt it all; and I know how difficult it is to strive alone to accomplish such a work. Will you let me stand beside you and help you, so far as human love and friendship may?'

He had moved forward a little, and was standing before the boy; and as he spoke he held out his hand. Jack sprang to his feet, and laid both his own hands in the outstretched palm.

'Mr. Spencer,' he said earnestly, 'if ever I give my father and mother cause to be proud of their boy, I shall tell them that they owe it all to you. I don't know what to make of you; but I tell you, if there is a spark

of honour or manliness left in me, I will prove myself worthy of the love and friendship you offer me.'

He paused a moment, but something else was struggling in his heart for utterance; and Mr. Spencer saw the struggle so plainly that he did not speak. The earnest, eager face grew quiet, the lifted head drooped a little, then a little lower still.

'So help me God!'

The words were spoken almost in a whisper; but never in all the happy days of his young boyhood had Jack Sheldon offered so sincere and hearty a prayer.

'Jack,' said Mr. Spencer, some half an hour later, as they sat together at the library window, 'I want you to tell me all about this affair, from its very beginning. You need let no false idea of honour toward Vickars keep you from revealing the whole truth. I had suspected him before anything was told me; and you owe it to me and to French Paul, who has been much misjudged, to give me the whole story, without attempting to shield any one.'

So the story was told; but Vickars would have been much surprised, if he had been secretly listening to the recital, to hear how much less prominent a part he had played than his own conscience told him he had taken. Jack began with his own vexation when Bertram received the command of the party; his resistance to his authority, little as it was used; and his determination to show himself superior to it; but he never whispered a word with regard to the fuel with which Fred had fed the smouldering fire, and kindled it into a flame. Mr. Spencer never knew, although he strongly suspected the truth, that the whole plan was originated and carried on by Vickars; nor that Jack had more than

once been seized with a fit of remorse and indecision, which had only been quieted by Fred's sneering allusions to Bertram's influence.

Quietly, calmly the tale was told. Ned was earnestly excused, and shown to have been led and coaxed on against his better judgment. Very little was said of Vickars, and a great deal of Jack Sheldon; for although the boy did not foolishly accuse himself for the sake of saving Vickars, he evidently felt a half-painful, half-proud consciousness that they two stood in different positions, and that a fault in Fred was doubly a fault in himself.

Never had his brother and his cousins seen Jack wear so serious a face as that with which he met them that morning; and yet it was a happy face. The boys had come to town again with Captain Rankin, too anxious to remain at the Point all day, and in the evening the whole party were to go back with him to make a fortnight's visit before their return home. A long talk the boys had together that morning. Jack told his story once more, often interrupted by Ned, who would not hear him blame himself without telling Fred's full share in the matter. When the tale was ended, Jack left his seat beside Archie, and, going over to Bertram, held out his hand.

'Captain Bert,' he said slowly, 'if I had been obedient to our superior officer, I should not have been led into this trouble, for I should not have rebelled against the captain he set over me. I'll try to be a true soldier from this day forward.'

Bertram grasped the outstretched hand with a warm, glad grip.

'Don't apologize to me, Jack,' he said, heartily; 'but



let us all try, boys, to prove ourselves worthy, not only of the trust Uncle Will reposed in us, but of Mr. Spencer's friendship also. I don't believe there are ten men in the world who would have done as he has done by us and for us.'

'No, nor I,' said Jack, earnestly.

It was very unlike him to say so little, but then it was very unlike him to feel so deeply.

## XVII.

### LIGHTHOUSE POINT.

'Now, father dear, you must see to it that the boys has a first-rate time here, or they'll be getting homesick, and wanting to go back to Mr. Spencer's folks,' said Mrs. Rankin, on the morning after the arrival of the boys at the Point. 'They do seem to fall in with our plain ways first-rate, and don't seem to mind eating in the kitchen, and such like, no more nor nothing ; but maybe they'll get tired of it after a bit, and I wouldn't like that.'

'Don't be afraid, Mrs. Rankin,' said Jack. 'You may grow tired of us before you are rid of us, but we shall amuse ourselves without troubling the captain.'

'Troubling the captain, dear heart ? Why, 'Siah likes nothing better than looking after young folk. He's as much a boy as any of you, 'Siah is. Oh, by the way, 'Siah, there's a lot of gulls lying up at the lighthouse. John was in here this morning, and he says there's more on the beach than they've seen this long while. I asked him just to leave them till the boys could go up. I thought as they'd like to see them.'

'Have they been shot ?' asked Bertram.

'Oh, no ; they fly for the light, and dash their poor, little, stupid brains out against the glass. They often find them lying dead there in the morning, though there's not often so many as there is to-day. You can walk over with father and see 'em ; and then, 'Siah dear maybe they'd like to go up in the light.'

'And there is the fog-whistle, too,' said Archie. 'I want to see how that works.'

'Of course you do,' said Jack, laughing. 'Archie is our investigating committee, Mrs. Rankin. He has to find out the why and the how of everything he sees and hears.'

'That's right,' said the hostess, turning to Archie, who had coloured a little under Jack's raillery. 'That's the way to make a man of yourself, my boy. You're the oldest of all these boys, aren't you, and the quietest? He's your leader, I suppose?' she added, turning again to Jack.

'No, ma'am. Bert is our captain. He and Archie and I are about the same age, within two years or so; but Archie is too dreamy, and I'm too—careless and unsteady'—he said the last words with a little pause before them, and with a flush on his bright face—'to be trusted as captain. No; Bert is head man, and a first-rate one too. Isn't he, boys?'

'There isn't any of you as is very bad, judging by looks and manners,' said Mrs. Rankin with a laugh, as a hearty assent from Archie and Ned answered Jack's question.

'Well,' said the old sea-captain, who had been sitting quietly at the breakfast table through all this conversation, 'I've been thinkin' that perhaps there wasn't nothin' that these young fellows would enjoy more than to go salmon-spearin' to-night. Did you ever spear salmon by night, boys?'

'No, sir!'—'No, sir!' and 'Do you go with torches?' and 'Wouldn't that be jolly?' and 'O fellows, that's prime!' broke from his eager listeners in every variety of expression and intonation.

'That's settled, then,' said the captain. 'And I'll just slip over to Hurst's, and see if I can raise spears enough for us all.'

'Do you use the common darts?' asked Bertram.

'Oh, no; that would tear the poor things. It's a straight spear, with no barb, which is fitted in between two pliable, light bits of wood, formin' a sort of spring like. When a fish comes up we strike him, and the wooden spring opens and closes over him, else we'd lose him even after we'd speared him, owin' to the spear bein' so fine and straight that it would come right out of him, and leave him in the water. Will you all come over to Hurst's, and go up into the lighthouse?'

They were ready for anything, whatever it might be, in the way of amusement, and, turning their backs on the little cottage which was now their home, they proceeded to cross the Point to the house of Mr. Hurst, the keeper of the light. Happily for them, Mr. Hurst was no less ready to play the guide than their host, and the 'investigating committee' and his friends were introduced to all that was to be seen and enjoyed on Cape Forchu.

There was the fog-horn, its steam-engine to be examined, and all its apparatus to be inquired into and searched through in every part. Questions innumerable were eagerly asked and kindly answered, until at last even Archie was satisfied, and declared himself ready for a visit to the light.

Up, up, up! Were there ever such flights upon flights of stairs to be mounted? But at last they reached the top, and stood in the light itself, between the great reflectors and the clear glass, through which the welcome rays fell brilliantly every night to warn approaching vessels from the rocky coast. Then the whole mechanism

of the revolving light must be explained. But it is not hard nor wearying to tell what we ourselves fully comprehend, when earnest, eager faces are looking into ours, and pleasant young voices are plying us with questions faster than we can answer them; and old Mr. Hurst did not tire of his delighted audience.

Then they must go out upon the narrow walk around the light, with its simple balustrade of iron to keep venturesome spirits from being dashed down upon the rocks below, to see the view. And a magnificent view it was, stretching away on the seaward side from the surf, which was roaring and dashing upon the rocks beneath them, to the calm, blue sea beyond, miles and miles away, broken here and there by the white sails of a schooner or fishing-smack; and on the landward side looking back to the town, whose pretty houses and churches appeared like a toy village in the distance.

‘See here, who is that boy?’ asked Ned, pointing down to a small figure which was walking somewhat rapidly over the rocks toward the shore.

‘That boy is my six-foot son,’ replied Mr. Hurst, with a laugh. ‘You forget how high you are, my lad. My John is over six foot.’

‘Bert,’ said Jack suddenly, noticing that Ned was engaged in talking with Mr. Hurst, ‘come along here—I want to speak to you;’ and he led the way to the farther side of the light. ‘Will you do something for me?’

‘Yes,’ said Bertram unhesitatingly, glad of the opportunity to show that he had appreciated Jack’s pleasant allusion to him as the captain. ‘What can I do for you?’

‘I don’t believe Ned will be able to go out to-night, and I want to stay at home with him.’

‘And lose such a jolly lark as this?’ exclaimed Bertram. He had never known Jack voluntarily to give up a pleasure in his life, and he looked at him in amazement. ‘You shan’t do any such thing.’

‘I wouldn’t mind it a bit,’ said Jack earnestly. ‘Ned would have the dumps if we left him alone, and I’d just as lief stay as not. I’ll have another chance to go spear-  
ing.’

‘No, no,’ said Bertram; ‘if he don’t go, I’ll stay home with him. I can’t let you, Jack. That would be giving up so much.’

‘And you have given up your own pleasure so often, and are so unused to having me give up anything, that you can’t believe it possible that I can do something for somebody else that comes a little hard on me. Don’t shake your head; that’s just it, Bert, and you know it. But, old fellow, I’m going to turn over a new leaf, and I want you to help me. A good captain ought to be ready to help his men, you know;’ and he smiled, a serious sort of a smile, that touched Bertram, but pleased him too.

‘Come, Bert, let me stay,’ he added, as his cousin only looked at him, and did not speak. ‘Can’t you believe in me?’

‘Believe in you! I do so,’ said Bertram, grasping his hand. ‘I believe you’re the best-hearted fellow that ever was made.’

‘Then show that you do by doing what I ask you. Will you, Bert?’

‘Well, yes,’ said Bertram, very unwillingly. ‘But I think it is too bad.’

‘I think it has been too bad, but I don’t mean to have it so any more. I’ve learned a lesson or two, old fellow, in these few days which I hope I shall never forget;’

and Jack threw his arm over his cousin's shoulder. 'It hasn't been all for nothing, Bert. I can tell a true soldier when I see him, if I do fail myself.'

'Come along, boys!' called Archie's voice, suddenly. 'Mr. Hurst says the tide is just right for the gorge now. It's coming in beautifully. Let's go over!'

'Ned,' said Bertram, as they reached the foot of the long stairs, 'don't you think it will be a little too much for you to walk over to the gorge if you are going out to-night? Hadn't you better go in and rest for a while?'

'I'm not tired,' objected Ned, 'and I want to see that gorge.'

'But you can see it to-morrow, or any other day.'

Ned hesitated, another objection just forming itself on his lips. But the next moment his clouded face cleared.

'All right, cap; I'll play baby. Good-bye, fellows. Don't let Archie get lost in the seaweed, poking after anemones and all sorts of messes;' and he turned toward the house alone, whistling as he went.

'Seems to me you've a good crew under you, captain,' said Mr. Rankin, looking after the boy as he passed out of sight.

'He ought to have,' said Jack quickly. 'A good captain makes good men, if there's anything in the men to work on. Look here, Archie; here's a horrid pasty-looking animal that will just suit you;' and he touched with his foot a large white jelly-fish which had been washed up upon the shore by the advancing tide.

'Oh! isn't he a beauty?' exclaimed Archie, lifting the creature in his hand, and gazing at it with real admiration. 'I never saw so large a one, and so beautifully

veined. Look here, boys. See him spread himself in this little pool. Isn't he a splendour?' and as the soft white mass gradually opened and spread itself out upon the water in which he had placed it, its faint tinge of colour deepening into a delicate rosy hue, he bent over it in rapture, eagerly pointing out its perfections with an enthusiasm which amused his brother and cousin, but delighted the old seaman.

'Wait till you get fairly up among the rocks,' said he, 'and then I'll show you things worth lookin' at. There's anemones ere that these jelly fellows can't hold a candle to, and sea-gardens prettier and more delicate than tropic plants themselves. Here, come around this big rock; there's a beautiful one in here.'

Beautiful indeed was the bright garden into which they gazed, leaning down over the edge of the rock. Sea-ferns of every colour, red, green, orange, violet, of every shade, and of the finest texture, waved their delicate fibres in the gently moving water, growing up from soft grasses and mosses which were of most brilliant hues, and were studded with tiny shells of a dazzling whiteness. There were miniature hills, on whose summits tiny trees waved their baby branches; miniature valleys, where the grass lay smooth and green; miniature ponds and lakes as clear as crystal, in which tiny fish darted to and fro with lightning speed—a very fairy garden lay beneath the water.

'Are these mosses and grasses worth anything out of the water?' asked Archie, when the first exclamations of surprise and delight had spent themselves.

'Take a bit up and see,' said the captain, a smile lighting up all his rugged face. He did enjoy these boys most thoroughly.



Archie plunged his hand into the quiet pool, and drew up the brightest of the brilliant ferns. It lay in his hand a dank, wet, hairy mass, of a dull reddish colour.

‘Ugh! toss it away,’ said Jack, pushing his hand aside.

‘No, no. I’ll put it back;’ and Archie bent down over the pool again, and laid the plant tenderly in the very spot from which he had taken it. The water flowed and moved about it for a moment, the fine fibres spread themselves slowly in the gentle current, the dull colour brightened, and in a moment the lovely little tree was waving its branches again in all their brilliancy.

‘Now for the gorge,’ said Jack, tiring of the picture before Archie was half satisfied.

‘You’ll find plenty more of the same sort over there,’ said Captain Rankin, as Archie looked lingeringly back at his garden; ‘and other things beside.’

And indeed he did. In a few moments’ time, his pantaloons rolled up above his knees, his coat-sleeves thrust up above his elbows, his hat pushed back from his forehead, and his quiet face all aglow with interest, he was standing knee-deep in the wet sea-weed, in a wide cleft in the rocks where star-fish, jelly-fish, and starry anemones were shining and glowing in all their beauty, every colour of the rainbow painted before his admiring eyes.

The gorge, though the waves were rushing into it with a noise like thunder, the white spray leaping high above the rocks, was nothing to him. The roar and dash were glorious; but, oh! these sea-gardens at his feet, and these lovely sea-creatures, half flowers, half fish! He could not leave them.

But at last Jack came down from the rocks above, and

actually dragged him away from 'this horrid mess,' as he termed the priceless collection of rather unattractive looking objects which Archie had gathered around him.

It was an hour or more before any of the group thought of moving from the grand spot. The pretty, delicate sea-flowers were beautiful indeed ; but these mammoth rocks, with the incoming tide roaring and dashing at their base with a furious cannonade, at which they smiled defiance in their giant strength, were something so grand and glorious that even volatile Jack was sobered down to quiet thoughtfulness.

The clear, bright day melted into a calm, star-lit evening,—'a prince of nights for a spearin' match,' as Captain Rankin called it ; and a merry party leaped into the two boats which were to carry the fishers to their fishing-ground in the channel. They were all there,—Captain Rankin and John Hurst, the respective commanders of the two boats, and all the boys ; for Jack's unselfishness was not put to the test, Ned declaring himself quite well enough to join the expedition, having remained quiet the whole day that he might be ready for it.

'Now, my man, you'll have to hold in a bit,' said Captain Rankin, as Jack, who had been making up all day for his quiet hour on the rocks by the wildest exuberance of spirits, gave a loud huzza as the boats were sent with a quick stroke of the oars out from the shore. 'You must bottle up all that noise till we've caught the fish we want, and then you may shout till you're hoarse, if you like it.'

The boats sped out swiftly and noiselessly into the channel, the torches fastened upon the bows were quietly lighted, the oars drawn into the boats, and all was ready—but the salmon. Silently the boats drifted on with

the tide, and as silently the fishers sat in their places, waiting for their prey.

‘See there,’ said John Hurst, only just above his breath, pointing over the side of the boat.

Jack and Archie, who were with him, looked eagerly out. Something was gleaming and shining in the water. Nearer it came with its silvery flash, now disappearing, now coming into view once more. John Hurst rose slowly and noiselessly in his place, with one of the long, light spears in his hand.

Nearer and nearer came the silvery gleam. Now they could see the fish, a fine salmon, swimming on to its death, poor thing, lured by the light on the boat’s side. The next moment John Hurst had bent quickly forward and thrown his spear, the beautiful fish lay quivering in the bottom of the boat, and Jack was on his feet, his hands pressed tightly on his mouth to keep back the joyous huzza which had leaped to his lips.

But that was nothing to the pleasure of the next moment, when, a spear in his own hand, he stood watching until another hapless fish should come shimmering through the quiet waters to see what this curious, bright apparition should be, shining over the usually dark waves. Slowly he came on his tour of investigation, so slowly that the eager boy bending over the bow could scarcely bide his time.

‘Quiet, quiet,’ said John Hurst’s warning voice. ‘Quiet, or you’ll lose him. Now strike!’

Down went the quick, sharp spear, the light spring closed over the bright scales, and in another instant the poor salmon lay beside his mate, never more to be tempted by any glowing star shining down into the blue waters.

It was fine sport, heightened by its novelty and by the surrounding darkness; and when at length, with both boats well laden with their spoils, the party turned towards home once more, all joined most merrily in the vociferous expressions of triumph with which Jack gave vent to his long-repressed excitement.

‘My, what a noise you did make!’ said Mrs. Hurst, as they gathered in her bright kitchen, each individual boy talking eagerly on his own responsibility, without the slightest idea that each and every other member of the group was rattling away quite as loudly. ‘I heard you all the way up here. Now come and have supper, for it’s eleven o’clock, and you must be as hungry as bears.’

Down they sat, readily enough, to the hot supper which their hostess’ kind hands had made ready for them; and ample justice they did to it.

‘Bless your brave hearts, how you can eat, to be sure!’ she said, laughing with thorough enjoyment as she refilled their empty dishes. ‘It just does me good to see you.’

And so it did, if one might judge by the sunshine of her beaming, motherly old face as she sat watching the rapid melting away of her good viands.

But every happy day, however bright and unclouded, must have its last hour, and this one, and many another, ended all too soon for our four boys.

Bright days they were to look back to, the days of that long visit in old Acadia, shadowed though some of them had been. For out of the cloud which had darkened them had shone a silver light, which touched all the after days of their young lives with beauty.

Shortly after the boys had gone down to the Point,

Mr. Spencer received a characteristic letter from Mr. Vickers, in answer to one which he had written him on the day after Fred's departure, telling him that his daughter had not been ill, nor had she returned to Boston until summoned there to care for his son, whose wounded leg had, owing to neglect and improper treatment, become very severely painful, and, for the present, entirely useless. He had, he informed Mr. Spencer, stopped his son's allowance of pocket-money until such time as the amount should accumulate to one-third of the value of the horse he had lost, presuming that the remaining two-thirds of her value would be paid by the other participators in the escapade; ending his letter by excusing himself and his wife from returning to Yarmouth to conclude their visit.

This missive was at once answered by a decided refusal to receive any such payment; and nothing more was ever heard of the matter from either father or son.

A few weeks after the last of the frequent visits with which the boys diversified their stay at the Point had been paid to the friends in the old stone house, which had grown to be a real home to them all, a beautiful horse, with a coat as brown and glossy as Bessie's own, was brought to Mr. Spencer's door. No note nor letter had been sent to the steamer with her, the clerk said, when questioned by Mr. Spencer; but, pinned beneath the soft blanket which covered her was a slip of paper, on which was written, in a bold but boyish hand,

'Will you ride this "Brown Bessie" for the sake of your grateful boys, Jack and Ned?'



'Will you ride this "Brown Bessie" for the sake of your grateful boys, Jack and Ned?'—Page 336.



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GIUSEPPE'S HOME.





# GIUSEPPE'S HOME.

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## I.

### GIUSEPPE'S STORY.

‘PENNY, please, penny. Give poor boy penny.’

It was a cold, bleak day, with the thermometer almost down to zero, and the wind whistling sharply around the street corners, creaking the sign-boards, whirling the dust into the eyes of unfortunate pedestrians, and snatching from them everything which was not either fastened with unusual security or held with a grasp of almost despairing strength. People pressed through the street in the teeth of the cutting wind with hard, firm tread, every step counting as so much gained, a sort of victory over the opposing force. Their crimson and purpled faces were turned sideways to escape as much as possible the sticks, papers, and general *débris* which filled the air, as they walked with half-shut eyes, lips compressed, and shoulders hunched to their ears; while their almost frozen hands clutched with a clinging grasp the fluttering cloak or shawl which their alert foe seemed determined to tear from their hold.

‘Penny, please, penny. Give poor boy penny,’ said a piping voice for the second time, as the gentleman to whom the words were addressed passed on, regardless of the plea.

'Haven't anything for you,' and the speaker hurried by at a pace in keeping with the rushing tempest; but he did not outstrip his petitioner.

'Penny, please, penny. 'Tis so cold dis day. Please, penny. See how cold poor Giuseppe,' and a pair of stiff, purple hands were held out before the gentleman.

Still he went on unheeding, with the boy at his side; until, to his amazement, a low ripple of laughter, followed by an actual peal of merriment, arrested his steps.

'So cold! oh, so cold!' said the boy, seeing that he had succeeded in enforcing attention. 'No eat dis day; no hot dis day. Give poor boy.'

The words were pitiful enough, with the slight figure shaking with the bitter cold to give them force; but the whole face looking up into that of the man, who now stood gazing down upon the boy, was beaming with smiles, radiant as the sunshine itself.

'What are you laughing at?' the gentleman asked, as his stiff fingers almost involuntarily sought his vest pocket.

'Oh!' and the thin shoulders were raised with an indescribable gesture of fun, 'me must not cry; 'tis none good. All de chillens cry. No, me do nevare cry; me laugh. 'Tis cold? well, me laugh; 'tis none to eat? well, me laugh; 'tis better as to cry, eh?' and again the low, musical ripple broke from his blue lips.

'Well, you are a philosopher,' said his companion with a smile. 'What if I should find ten cents for you? What should you do then?'

'Ten cents, oh!' and the smiling face grew grave in a moment. 'Den me say fank you, signor, and me kiss your hand. Ten cents! He buy me macaroni, oh, so much!' and he held up his two hands like a cup.

'Marie and me, we will eats and eats till we no can eats any more.'

'Who is Marie?' asked the gentleman, so interested now in his little friend that the wind whistled by him almost unheeded.

'Marie? Oh, she is mine home!'

'Your home?'

'Yes. 'Tis what you call home in dis country. Home? is it not so? She do love me; she do say, "Poor Giuseppe!" When I have none to eat, she do say so sweet, "Nevare mind, noder time you get some," and she kiss me. Yes, she is my home.'

The gentleman did not answer for a moment. He glanced around him as if looking for something, and the next moment held out his hand to the boy.

'Come over to that store with me,' he said, indicating by a movement of his head an eating-house on the opposite side of the street. 'I want to talk to you; and we can be warm and comfortable there, and can have something to eat.'

To his surprise the boy drew back, glancing up at him with a face full of distrust and suspicion.

'Me no go to no house,' he said, shaking his head. 'Me 'fraid.'

'You are afraid? Why, I only want to help you. I want to give you some dinner. Why are you afraid? I will take care of you. Come; it is so cold here.'

'You will not let Martino take me?' asked the boy, hesitating still, but evidently tempted beyond his powers of resistance by the glowing delights of the offer.

'No; no one shall harm you. But who is Martino?' added the gentleman, as the boy, half unwillingly, suffered him to lead him away.

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'Martino! You do not know Martino Casola? Oh, he is bad, bad; oh, so bad! He beat me. Martino Casola! When me is man me kill Martino Casola! Me hate he!'

There could be no doubt as to the truth of those last words. They were spoken with a fury which fairly made them hiss through his set teeth, while the coal-black eyes burned with anger, and the small hands clenched themselves in their powerless wrath. But the next instant the passionate face changed to one of fear and dread, as he almost whispered,

'Me must not speak. He hear every sing, he see every sing; he so wise. He very bad, but he very wise. He find me when me speak.'

They had by this time reached the door of the restaurant; and, leading the boy in, the gentleman seated him at a table, and ordered lunch for him without asking for an explanation of his incoherent statements. Giuseppe had looked carefully around the apartment on entering it, but seeing nothing to startle him, sat down at the table to which his new friend had taken him, and awaited further developments with quite a calm and satisfied air.

In a few moments the waiter to whom the order had been given returned with a tray bearing so plentiful a meal that the eyes of the hungry little Italian danced with delight.

'Oh, him smell good!' he exclaimed, hugging closer to his breast in his ecstasy of joyful anticipation the small violin which he had held under his arm all through his conversation with his friend. 'Meat! Meat!' and he laughed aloud with glee, as a dish of nicely broiled chops was set down before him, flanked on one side by a little pot of fragrant coffee, and on the other by a plate

of smoking potatoes. 'But, oh !' and the joyous light faded suddenly out of his face, 'so big hot dinner for me, all for me, and mine Marie so hungry !'

'You shall take some dinner home to your Marie,' said the gentleman, kindly. 'Now—'

But before he could finish his sentence, the boy was on his knees before him, his clasped hands resting on his lap, and his dark eyes, bright with unshed tears, lifted to his face.

'You so good man,' he faltered. 'Me love you. Giuseppe will serve you all de days. What you call you name ? Me love you name. It is good.'

'My name is Mr. Phillips,' said his friend, smiling down upon the trembling, excited boy. 'But come now ; your dinner will be cold. Jump up and eat away like the hungry fellow you are ; for, after you have had all you need, I want you to tell me about this Marie whom you seem to love so much.'

'Oh, yes, I tell you,' said Giuseppe, rising to his feet, his volatile mind led off at once in the new direction. 'Marie—'

'Not yet,' said Mr. Phillips. 'You must eat your dinner first. Sit down, and I will pour out a cup of coffee for you.'

The boy obeyed, and, having once succeeded in setting him fairly at work with his knife and fork, the gentleman had no further need to urge him on. Giuseppe was evidently desperately hungry. Bread, potatoes, and mutton disappeared like the snow before an April sun. Only twice or thrice did the rattle of his knife and fork cease ; and, each time that the pause was made, Mr. Phillips, on glancing up from the paper with which he was amusing himself while he waited, found the keen

black eyes fixed upon him with a touching, soft expression, and heard a whispered, 'Meester Pheelleeps, Meester Pheelleeps,' as if the boy were repeating the words for the simple pleasure of speaking the name of his benefactor. Becoming engrossed at length in the contents of the newspaper, he forgot his *protégé*, until he was recalled to a realization of the situation by a long-drawn sigh of complete satisfaction and content.

'Well,' he said, turning toward Giuseppe, who was sitting back in his chair before a row of empty dishes with a broad smile upon his face, 'have you had a good dinner, and plenty of it?'

'Yes, Meester Pheelleeps; so good as—oh, so good as gold, and so plenty—more plenty as gold,' and he laughed roguishly.

'You have learned my name very nicely,' said Mr. Phillips, 'but you have not told me your own.'

'My name? Giuseppe Antronelli, to kiss the hand of Meester Pheelleeps.'

The gracious bend of the small head seemed strangely out of keeping with the general appearance of the ragged musician; and Mr. Phillips' interest, already very much excited, was quickened into still stronger activity.

'That is a good name,' he said; 'you are an Italian, I suppose?'

'Yes. Italian. Oh, yes!'

'Have you a father or a mother?'

'No, signor. No fader, no moder.'

'Where do you live?'

Again that quick look of distrust changed the boy's face completely. He hesitated a moment, fixing his eyes on his questioner with a curious mixture of appeal and suspicion in his expression.

'Never mind, if you do not care to tell me,' said Mr. Phillips. 'But will you not trust me with your story? I want to help you if I can, but I must know something about you before I can do you much good.'

'And you will not tell Martino Casola?' whispered Giuseppe.

'No; I will not tell any one who will harm you. Come over here and sit close beside me, and let me know how you came to this country, and what is the trouble between you and this Casola. Come. I think you ought to trust me as your friend.'

'Me do; me will,' said the boy, springing up and seizing the hand which the gentleman held toward him. 'Me do love you, Meester Pheelleeps;' and, before he could be prevented, he had pressed his lips upon Mr. Phillips' hand.

'Then sit down here and tell me all you can about yourself,' said the gentleman, releasing his hand as soon as possible from Giuseppe's fervent grasp. 'Who brought you to this country? and how long have you been here?'

'Mine fader, he take me; but he die and leave me. How long time me be here? 'Tis two snows. 'Tis one big cold and snow when we comes to dis country. Den he gets warm, and de flowers come, and 'tis like mine own Italia; den de snow is come again; den again de lovely flowers, and de birds sing; and now de cold and snow once more.'

'Two years you have been here, then. And your father brought you, you say? Was he a musician too?'

'No, signor. Mine fader, he make angels and madonnas, white and beautiful; oh, lovely angels, and little babies asleep on a pillow!'

'You mean he cut them from marble?'



'Yes, but he did die on de ship. Mine moder she die ; and den mine fader he say, "Come, Giuseppe, I can no more stay here wiz no dear moder : we go to America." So we come, and mine fader he die on de ship, and leave poor Giuseppe. And Martino Casola he say, "I take care for Giuseppe ;" and he speak kind and good, and so I go wiz him, and we comes to New York, and we comes to Pheeladelphia. Den Martino he send me in de street wiz my violin ; and when de peoples gives much money he be glad, and when dey gives small money he beat me ;—oh, he beat me very bad, so bad till me run away and hide in noder house.

'Den he find me and bring me back, and beat me more bad as before, till me lie on de floor and cannot walk. Den me get well and run away once more ; and again he find me—oh, he so wise !—and beat me so bad as oder time, and lock me in de closet, and give me none to eat, one day, two day, tree day, four day. Den he come and he say, "Now you goes out and plays de violin, and gets much money. De peoples dey gives you much money when you looks so sick !" So me comes home wiz good deal money, and he say, "'Tis not 'nough," and he give me hard hit on mine head, and say, "Go to bed !" So me goes to bed, and me cries. Den he gets bottle, and he drinks and drinks ; and after long time he is asleep. So me creeps out, and de money lies on de table, and me takes all de money, and me runs and runs until me finds de big cars ; and me hides under de seat wiz my violin ; and two peoples dey comes in and dey sits down, and nobody find me. Den me feel so funny in mine head. Dere is big noise dere, and it hurts ; oh, it hurt like my ceiling would come off ; and den me lie all cold and wet, and den me dess forget all about him.

'Bimeby me feel funny again, and me open mine eyes, and 'tis all still, and nobody is dere. So me creeps out, and de big cars is in a big house, and me see nobody till me goes down de steps; den a man call out, "Hallo!" and me say, "Hallo!" and he say, "What you doin' dere?" and me say, "Lookin' for mine fader!" And so he laugh and say, "All de people's gone long time 'go!" So me say, like me did not mind, "Oh, me find he. Me know where!" So me come away. Den me find a boy, and me say, "What place is dis?" and he say, "Dis is New York." So dis is mine story, Meester Pheelleeps.'

There could be no doubt of the truth of the story. The eager, rapt manner of the poor little historian left no room for incredulity.

'And where do you live now?' asked Mr. Phillips.

'In Baxter Street, wiz mine Marie and Joe.'

'Who are Marie and Joe?'

'Me do not know, Meester Pheelleeps. One day me gets no money, and me be so hungry me be sick; and me lay down in a court, and me sink, "Now me will die, like mine fader and mine moder." Den bimeby me hear somebody say, "Leetle boy, you dies here: you come wiz me." Den me tries to shake mine head, but 'tis too much troubles; so me shuts mine eyes and says no word. Bimeby somesin' goes in my mouf, and me opens mine eyes, and me am in a bed, and Marie is dere, and she puts de nice warm soup in my mouf, and she say, "Drink, drink, leetle boy!" So me drink, and me feel so good; and den me go to sleep; and bimeby me wakes up, and dere is Joe, and he say, "Hallo! yun—yun—"'

He paused, and looked helplessly up into Mr. Phillips' face.

'How you call dat word?'

'Youngster?' suggested the gentleman with a smile.

'Oh, yes; dat is he. Me cannot call he. Well, Joe he say dat; and me laugh, and den me cries; and den me laugh once more. And Marie, she come and kiss me, and say, "Poor leetle boy;" and Marie she be always my home to dis day.'

'Are Marie and Joe Italians too?' asked Mr. Phillips.

'No, signor; but dey love leetle Italian. Dey speaks Inglese good. Mine fader he know to speak Inglese, and he tell me leetle, and Marie she teach me much words. When me come here me only say leetle; now me talk like Inglese boy.'

'And how old are you?'

Giuseppe shook his head.

'Ten, leven, firteen; me do not know.'

'Is Joe older than you?'

'Yes, signor; Joe call heself fifteen. Marie is more big as Joe, and me is leetler as Joe.'

'Would you like to have me go to see you and your friends?'

'Yes, oh, yes!' cried the boy, eagerly. 'Come dis day.'

'I cannot very well go to-day,' said Mr. Phillips, kindly; 'but if you will give me the number of the house, I will come very soon.'

'But me cannot tell,' objected Giuseppe. 'Me can go, but me cannot tell you to go. Come wiz me, dear Meester Pheelleeps; come wiz me.'

Rather uncertain whether he should be able to find the house without assistance, even with such a description of its surroundings as the boy might be able to give him, and wholly unable to resist his pleading tone and

look, Mr. Phillips laughingly consented to accompany his young companion ; and, having ordered a basket full of substantial viands to be put up for the edification of Marie and Joe, set out upon his unexpected journey with Giuseppe at his side.

‘ We had better ride down,’ he said, hailing a passing car.

‘ Ride !’ and Giuseppe’s eyes danced. ‘ Oh, beautiful !’ and in another moment he was seated at the head of the car, with the basket safely tucked away beneath the seat, watching the horses with an enjoyment so engrossing that they had reached Baxter Street before he even turned his head toward his new friend.

## II.

### AN INHOSPITABLE HOSTESS.

THE tumble-down building into which Giuseppe led the way was by no means an attractive place ; and Mr. Phillips, to whom such an expedition was altogether a new experience, rather hesitated, as, having entered the dilapidated doorway, he saw before him a long, dark corridor, whose broken floor and cracked, discoloured walls were anything but inviting in appearance.

‘Come in, come in, Meester Pheelleeps,’ said Giuseppe, encouragingly, noticing that he had paused on the doorstep. ‘We find Marie up de stair, way up to de top. Come.’

Buttoning his coat closely across his chest, with a disagreeable thought that this dimly lighted house looked like a refuge for every grade of evil-doers, Mr. Phillips followed his guide up the dark entry and the still darker stairs. Never in the whole course of his life had he been in such a place. The balusters were entirely gone ; huge rat-holes pierced almost every step of the staircase ; and when, on placing his foot on one step which felt peculiarly rickety and uncertain, he put his hand on the wall to steady himself, he drew it shudderingly back, covered with a cold, dank moisture which was slowly dripping down over the blackened paint, and which seemed to strike an icy chill to his very heart.

Stumbling and staggering on in the wake of his alert little leader, who sprang over the dangerous pathway

without even a thought of its peril, Mr. Phillips found himself at last at the head of the fourth flight of stairs, standing beneath a low, sloping roof, through whose broken rafters the grey November sky was very plainly discernible. Just at his feet lay a mound of snow, which had been swept in during a flurry that had passed over the city a few hours before; and around the broken edges of the apertures in the roof hung long, slender icicles of a dirty brownish colour.

‘Dis is mine place; come in, Meester Pheelleeps,’ said Giuseppe, with a graceful little gesture, springing to open a closed door which stood before them; but the door resisted his efforts.

‘Why, him locked!’ he exclaimed, with a look of great surprise. ‘Marie! Marie! Open to Giuseppe!’

There was a rustling and a bustle inside the room; a quick moving to and fro, opening and shutting of heavy drawers, and a sound like a stifled cry. Giuseppe looked very much startled, and there was an accent almost of terror in his voice as he cried out again,

‘Marie! Mine Marie! Open! Open!’

‘Wait a minute!’ responded a cheerful voice. ‘Are you alone, little Gossip?’

‘No, me have a friend, a beautiful good friend. He stands in de cold. Open, Marie!’

The door shook violently, with a crazy clatter which told of loosened hinges and a broken lock; and after a few moments of delay, spent by some one within in frantic efforts to turn the rusty key, the bolt shot back, and the sole apparent occupant of the room stood in the doorway.

The apparition was almost startling to the visitor. He had expected to see a gentle, soft-eyed French or

Spanish girl (Giuseppe having said that she was not of his own nationality), slight and delicate in appearance. The picture he had conjured up to himself from the boy's enthusiastic story was full of grace and loveliness ; the reality, the real, veritable Marie, was a broad-shouldered, heavy-looking girl, fifteen or sixteen years old, with rough, sandy-coloured hair, freckled complexion, and big, coarse hands, dressed in a ragged calico which hung in lank folds around her, showing that she had but little, if anything, beside to shield her from the stinging cold.

But there could be no doubt that this was the sweet, tender Marie of Giuseppe's story ; for in a moment he had thrown himself upon her, clasping her closely about the neck, and kissing her on either cheek in his demonstrative affection.

'See, Marie, here is mine good friend,' he said, turning at once to the gentleman, who stood watching the girl with a curious interest ; for he had seen the plain, unattractive face brighten almost into positive beauty as it bent to return the boy's loving embrace. 'He name Meester Pheelleeps. He give me much money, ten cents ; he give me dinner ; he give me all dis for you, Marie ;' and he lifted the cover of his well-filled basket. 'He do all dis, and den he come to see you, 'cause I tell him you so good !'

'Oh, you ridiculous goose !' said Marie, roughly ; but the coarse, hard hand which she laid on his ragged shoulder touched him very tenderly. 'Thank you. I'm sure you're very kind.'

The last words were addressed to Mr. Phillips, and were gratefully spoken ; but the girl still stood in the doorway, barring all entrance to the room.

'Bring him in, Marie ; 'tis so cold,' said Giuseppe,

looking at her wonderingly. 'We have leetle fire; is it not so?'

'Not much,' said the girl. 'It's awful cold in here;' and still she did not move.

'But Marie, Marie,' pleaded Giuseppe, evidently much distressed by her want of hospitality, 'he would sit down. He is much tired, poor Meester Pheelleeps; bring him to de fire.'

The girl fixed her eyes upon the gentleman's face as if she would read him through and through. He returned her gaze steadily, and, after a moment's silence, said with a smile,

'I don't wish to force myself into your room. If you do not care to have me visit you, I can go back again. I only wanted to help you and this boy if I could. Good-bye. Good-bye, Giuseppe,' and he held out his hand to the little Italian; but he would not take it.

'No, no,' he cried out passionately. 'Marie, Marie! What do you do to mine good man? He come so much far, and you shut de door, and say, "You no can come in!" He cold, and you say, "You no can see mine fire!" Marie, what do you?'

The door was thrown wide open, and the girl stepped aside, saying ungraciously, 'Well, come in, then. 'Tain't no kind of a place for quality-folks.'

'Never mind, Giuseppe,' said Mr. Phillips, not caring to accept the disagreeable invitation; 'we will see one another some other time.'

'No, dis time, dis time,' persisted the boy, seizing Mr. Phillips' hand, and trying to draw him into the room.

'Yes, come in,' said Marie, more pleasantly. 'I'm sure I don't grudge nothin' to any one what's good to



little Gossip. There now, Gossip, don't take on ; the gentleman's kindly welcome, only the place ain't fit. Walk in, Mister, or he'll break his heart. Sit easy on this chair ; it's got its leg broke, but it's the only one we've got.'

She placed a rickety chair beside the hearth, wiping it off as she did so with the skirt of her tattered dress. As he sat down she glanced uneasily at him, as if she were for some cause in fear of him ; and then she moved away to the farther side of the room, and began to sing in a low, droning sort of tone.

The room was a most wretched-looking place, in fit keeping with the miserable approach to it. It was very small, with one little window, whose sole unbroken pane of glass admitted all the light which could make its way into the cheerless spot, the remaining divisions of the window being stuffed with papers to keep out the frosty air. The furniture consisted of the chair upon which Mr. Phillips tried to balance himself as he sat beside the few sticks that burned feebly on the broken hearth, a three-legged table supported against the wall, and an old bureau of a very heavy, ancient build, the top of which had been completely shattered, so that the upper drawers were open to sight. That mattered little, however, as the owners had nothing to enclose within them had they been ever so secure. Marie stood leaning against this bureau, singing her droning song, with her face turned toward the hearth, where her visitor sat, with Giuseppe lying at his feet like an affectionate little spaniel.

Mr. Phillips was very much interested in this girl already. The complete contrast which her appearance afforded to the imaginary picture which he had drawn of

her; her disagreeable manner and apparently ugly disposition, set over against the loveliness of the tender friend whom Giuseppe had described; and last, but not least, an indescribable something about herself, drew him on to endeavour, notwithstanding her coldness and reticence, to find out a little of her character and history.

‘So you and Giuseppe are the best of friends?’ he said, turning towards her, forgetting for the moment the very unstable condition of his chair, which groaned audibly as it gave a sudden lurch that had well-nigh precipitated him upon the floor.

‘Look out, or you’ll be over!’ exclaimed Marie, under her breath, an angry flush mounting to her temples. ‘You’d best sit still if you don’t want to measure your length on the boards; and they ain’t so clean neither. We’ll have to be still here. There’s a woman awful sick in the next room. Yes; me and Gossip is good friends. I found him nigh hungered and froze to death, and me and Joe has taken him in.’

‘What is your name? Marie—?’

The girl laughed,—the first pleasant look which he had seen on her face since he came into the room, lighting it up like a glimpse of sunshine.

‘My name is Martha Giles. I ain’t no Marie, only to little Gossip yonder. I suppose he can’t frame to say Martha. Them furriners, they always talk so queer. Seems like they can all rattle off their own hard words that nobody can understand, and yet they can’t speak English when it’s as easy as nothin’. They’re a queer lot; but Gossip is a trump,’ and the sharp eyes fell softly on the boy again.

He smiled up at her, delighted to hear her conversing

pleasantly with his friend. But suddenly his face changed, a look of bewildered surprise coming over it ; for that curious stifled cry which they had heard before sounded through the room again.

'Why, what is dat, Marie?' he asked, scrambling to his feet.

'It sounded like the cry of a baby,' said Mr. Phillips.

'A baby!' exclaimed Marie, sharply. 'There ain't no baby here, 'less it's down in the back yard.'

'Perhaps there is a little child in that next room,' suggested the gentleman, nodding his head toward a door on the farther side of the apartment.

'That's the closet where I sleep,' said Marie, as sharply as before. 'There ain't no child there.'

Despairing of gaining anything further from his visit, Mr. Phillips rose to go. Marie came forward instantly, opened the door for him to pass out, and, pushing Giuseppe before her, followed him into the hall, closing the door behind her.

'Good-bye, my boy,' said Mr. Phillips, holding out his hand to Giuseppe.

'Good-bye, Meester Pheelleeps,—dear, good Meester Pheelleeps. One day come 'noder time ; den Marie will be good. Me nevare know mine Marie so bad before,' and he looked reproachfully into the girl's face.

She, in her turn, looked deepest reproach at him, and then she lifted her eyes toward the visitor.

'Good-bye, Marie ;' and Mr. Phillips stretched toward her his left hand, his right being still firmly clasped by Giuseppe's brown fingers.

She took the proffered hand, and glanced shyly at him as she said, 'I think you're very obligin' to offer after I've been so ugly. I ain't often hateful ; but when I am,

I just am, and that's all about it. Thank you kindly for the basket, too. Joe 'll be glad to get a bite when he comes in, for he hadn't a bit this morning. Will Gossip take the basket back for you ?'

'No ; I do not want it.'

'Well, we'll be pleased to see you again some time ; only don't ever come in without knockin'. Gossip, go down with the gentleman and show him the worst places, or he'll be like to break his neck. Stick by him till he's safe inside the cars ; for any of these roughs about here'll know him for quality, and may do him a mischief. Good-bye, Mister. I'm sorry I was so ugly. Don't lay it up agin me, will you ?'

'No, I won't bear malice ; but if you wish to make friends in this world, Marie, you must at least return good for good. I want Giuseppe to come to see me in a day or two, say on Friday. Here is my name, and the number of my office. Will you see that the address is kept safely, and that he comes to me on Friday morning at ten o'clock ?'

'Yes, sir,' said Marie, meekly. 'I'm really sorry, Mister.'

'Well, well ; we'll get on better another time, perhaps. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye. Gossip, when you've showed the gentleman to the cars, you'd best come back.'

'Me will. Come, Meester Pheelleeps ; me will not let you fall. Dere is big hole ; don't put your foot in him.'

With many a caution, and many a slip and stumble, too, the descent was at length safely accomplished, the street-car hailed, and Mr. Phillips deposited therein ; and then Giuseppe, his affectionate heart full of grieved

wonder at this strange change in his beloved Marie, mounted again to their room, determined to find out, if it were possible, what had induced her to return such wonderful kindness with such equally wonderful rudeness and ingratitude.

### III.

#### 'LEETLE COUSINE.'

To Giuseppe's surprise, he found the door again tightly fastened, but Marie answered his somewhat impatient knock without an instant's delay.

'There ain't nobody with you, is there?' asked her voice at the key-hole.

'No; nonebody. Open de door, Marie.'

'You're sure you're all alone?'

'Yes; so sure as any sing.'

The door was cautiously opened, but closed and locked again the moment that Giuseppe stood within the room. The boy glanced around him curiously; but, before he could move, Marie had laid a detaining hand upon him.

'See here, little Gossip; I've got the biggest surprise for you that you ever had in all your life. Can you keep a secret?'

'A setret?' repeated the boy, interrogatively. 'Oh, yes! me know; a setret is no to tell nonebody. No; me don't tell him. Why, Marie, what you got? Somebody gives you much money? Your eyes do be so bright.'

Her eyes were indeed bright; her whole face was actually aglow with some intense pleasure and delight. Giuseppe was perfectly mystified.

'Tell me, Marie; me no tell nonebody,' he said, eagerly.

'Come, then, and I'll show you something;' and

taking him by the hand she drew him over to the old bureau, and pointed silently into the lower drawer, which had been opened since he was last in the room.

Giuseppe fairly cried out in his amazement. From the depths of the great drawer there looked up at him a pair of sweet blue eyes, blue as the sunny skies of his own dear Italy ; and, as he bent closer, two tiny hands were lifted toward his face, and a soft little 'coo' came from as rosy a pair of baby lips as ever sung their sweet song in any rich and noble home.

'A baby!' exclaimed the boy, as soon as he could find words to express his surprise. 'How is it come here?' and he glanced up at the cracked roofing, as if he thought that perhaps some little angel might have dropped from the bright world above down through the rafters of the old garret. 'Who does it belong?'

'It belongs to me,' said Marie, very determinately. 'I found her ; she is mine.'

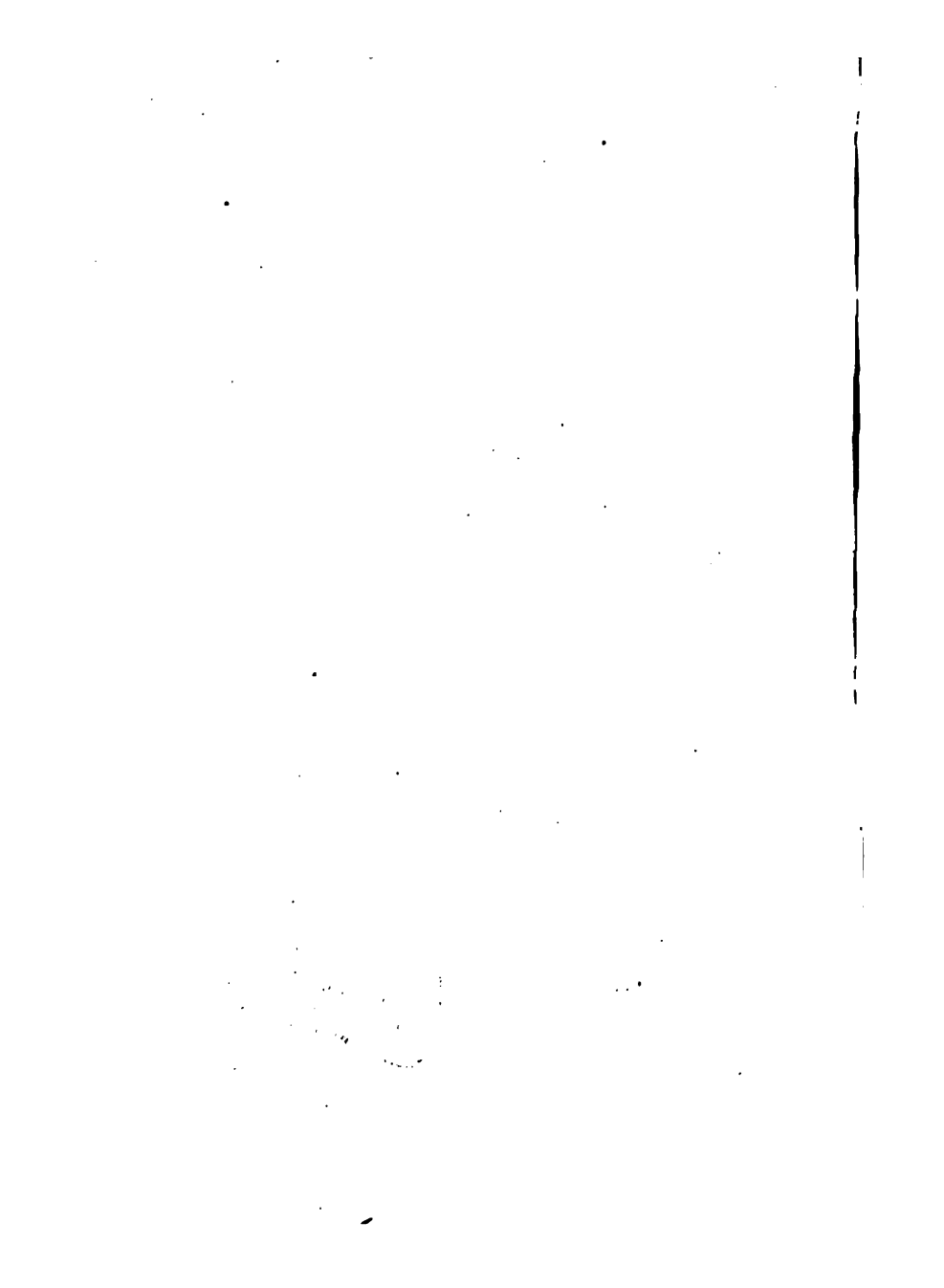
'Where did you find she? In a bar'l?' for Giuseppe knew that Marie made some very advantageous discoveries in the course of her daily researches in the waste-barrels of more fortunate housekeepers.

'No, not in a barrel,' said Marie, with a happy laugh, 'but in a bundle. I was going along Crosby Street, pokin' into things, and I heard a funny kind of a noise. It seemed to come right out of a arey-way behind me. There wasn't nothin' there but an old bit of oil-cloth, as I could see ; but I was so sure that the noise come from there that I went into the arey and lifted up the oil-cloth ; and there was a old shawl all bundled up, and, sure enough, the noise come out of that shawl. So I pulls it open, and there was the baby ; and when it saw me it just laughed all over its little face. And I bundled



"It belongs to me," said Mary, very determinately. "I found her ;  
she is mine," — *Fate's* son.





it up again, and slipped it right into my sack with the pickin's, and ran off home as fast as I could tear. I'd just got safe in when you and that man came knockin' at the door, and I popped baby into the bureau drawer, lest he'd make me give her up to the perlice; and, Gossip, I was that scared of the man lest he'd hear her cry that I couldn't do no better nor I did. She was most asleep when I put her in the drawer, and I thought maybe if I sung a bit by her she'd just drop off; and I guess she did, only the man waked her makin' such a noise with that old chair. Dear me! Wasn't I glad when I got him safe outside without his mistrusting anything about her? I was feared of me life that she'd die all shut up in there. Poor little baby! Martha's sweet little baby!' and the girl bent over the child with a lovely smile on her plain face.

The little one put up its hands with a low, soft gurgle of baby pleasure, and Marie lifted it in her arms and hushed it on her breast with all the deft tenderness of a young mother.

'Where is de moder of dis baby, and de fader?' asked Giuseppe, wonderingly.

'I don't know. I guess they couldn't take care of it, and put it out for the perlice to find. Like enough they've got a houseful, and ain't got bread to feed 'em. There's plenty of sich. Maybe they're dead, and whoever had the care of it put it out 'cause they didn't want to bother with it;' and Marie clasped the child still closer in her loving arms.

'Poor leetle baby. 'Tis more bad as me wizout any moder and fader, 'cause she so leetle bit of sing. Me kiss she 'cause she have no moder,' and he bent and kissed the soft, smooth cheek. 'See how white and

fair, Marie,' and he laid his own brown hand against the infant's cheek. 'Giuseppe is much black, but see how white is de baby. Oh, she is beautiful, very much beautiful! Me love she!'

'So do I; I love her dearly,' said Marie, eagerly. 'And we'll keep her always, Gossip, for our very own. Now listen, and I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to tell everybody that she is my little cousin, and that my aunt gave her to me when she lay a dyin'.'

'What she lay?' asked Giuseppe, in surprise. 'Many times you say, "lay abed;" what you say dis time,— "lay *adine*"?'

'A dyin', I said,' repeated Marie, laughing. 'I mean she's gone and died.'

'But what is you aunt?' said the boy, still much perplexed.

'Oh, she ain't nothin'; I'm only pretendin'. If the perlice finds out I've got the baby, and it ain't none of my belongings, they'll take her away, most like, and put her in some sort of 'sylum. But if I tell 'em she's my little cousin, and my aunt left her to me, they won't meddle, I don't believe. Now you mustn't forget, Gossip. If anybody says anything about our baby, you just say that Marty's aunt took sick and died, and that Marty's taking care of her baby. My aunt's name was Mrs. Scott. Will you remember?' and the girl laughed merrily at what she considered her own acuteness.

'Mees Schort,' repeated Giuseppe after her. 'Yes; me do not forget. Marie, where is Meester Schort?'

The baby, who had fallen fast asleep in its nest in Marie's arms, was wakened by the peal of laughter with which she replied to Giuseppe's question.

'He's gone to Philadelphia,' she said, well satisfied

that he should understand her so literally: 'you know that place? They won't mistrust nothin' about that,' she added, with another gurgle of amusement; 'there's lots of men just mean enough to go off and leave a wife and baby to be stuck into 'sylums. Now, what are you going to say, Gossip, if anybody asks you?'

'Me say: Marie got a woman what put a baby in a shawl, and give she to Marie; and den de woman she go to be dead, and de fader he go to Pheeladelphia, and leave de poor leetle baby on de street, and Marie she find de baby—oh, Marie! me cannot tell how you get she;' and poor Giuseppe, hopelessly befogged, brought his confused story to a close.

Marie saw that there was but little chance of his telling the tale as she wished it told unless she could make him understand her more clearly.

'See here, Gossip,' she said, almost sternly; 'do you want the perlice to come here and drag away our baby, and shut her up somewhere,—I don't know where?'

'No, 'deed no!' exclaimed Giuseppe, earnestly, laying his arm over the little thing, as if to defend it from the threatened disaster.

'Then you must forget all I told you about finding her in the street. Don't ever think of it again. Will you try?'

'Oh, yes! me try,' said Giuseppe, always ready to do anything that Marie asked of him. 'But when he comes in here,' and he tapped his forehead with a roguish look, 'what me do wiz him?'

'Put it right out,' said Marie emphatically, 'and say—Gossip, you're a goose. Marty's aunt died, and gave that baby to her. She is my little cousin. Do you understand?'

'Ye-es,' said Giuseppe, rather uncertainly.

'Then tell me what you will say.'

'Me say,' replied the boy, speaking very slowly and carefully,—'Me say,—dis leetle baby she belong to mine Marie. De woman she go dead, and she give baby to mine Marie; and de baby is name leetle Cousime. Dat is so!'

'First-rate, Gossip, first-rate!' cried Marie, clapping her hands, delighted with her success, and wisely concluding to attempt nothing further.

The dull, dark day was fast drawing to its close, evening falling very early in that old garret. 'Leetle Cousime' had dropped asleep on Marie's knees, and lay there in as deep and sweet a slumber as if she were resting in a downy cradle; while Giuseppe, on the floor at the girl's feet, eagerly gave her a detailed account of his meeting with Mr. Phillips, and of all that gentleman's kindness to him.

'Whist a minute,' said Marie, suddenly turning her head aside in a listening attitude.

'There's Jim Farley come in downstairs. Joe 'll be here in another minute, and we must have a spread ready for him. Gossip, run down to the store, and ask Miss Farley will she trust us for a dip. Joe 'll pay her a Saturday night. Easy now; don't wake, leetle Cousime,' and she laughed a low, pleased laugh, as, rising with the baby in her arms, she laid it gently down in the bureau drawer on a heap of rags, without disturbing its sweet dreams.

In almost less time than it had taken her to give the order, Giuseppe had returned with the tallow candle, which Mrs. Farley, the owner of the tiny store which occupied the lower part of the house, had kindly con-

sented to give him 'on trust.' She was poor enough herself, a widow, with six little children dependent upon her; and yet she never could resist the motherless and fatherless boy, when he looked up at her with those beautiful liquid eyes, and said: 'Please, Mees Fairley, and me pays you so soon as me gets some money.'

And so to-night, when he had told her naively that he had ten cents in his pocket, but that he must keep it toward the rent day, soon to fall due, she had only laughed, and said cheerily, 'Well, you can leave it against the Saturday night. It's too bad for you to be all in the dark up there.'

'Did you tell her about leetle Cousime?' asked Marie, the moment he re-entered the room.

'No,' replied the boy. 'Me sink about she; but me did forget de name of de womans dat do be dead, so me don't say nossin' 'bout she. What do she be name, Marie?'

'Miss Scott,' said Marie, gravely.

'Oh, yes! Mees Schort. 'Noder time me don't forget.'

'Now bring the plates, Gossip.'

The 'plates,' three broken bits of a large dish which had been one of the discoveries made in picking over waste-barrels, were placed around the table; the candle, stuck in the neck of a bottle, ornamented the centre, and shed light on such a meal as had never before been spread in that room, Marie having emptied Mr. Phillips' basket while Giuseppe went to the store for the candle, — a nice piece of cold boiled beef, cheese, crackers, bread, butter, and an apple-pie.

'There!' exclaimed Marie, standing back from the table to take the full effect of its appearance; 'isn't that a supper? Won't Joe open his eyes, though? He ain't

seen the like of that in a twelvemonth. Here he comes this minute.'

As she spoke a shuffling, shambling step came up the stairs, and in another moment a figure in perfect accordance with the slow, characterless tread entered the room,—a tall, round-shouldered, loose-jointed boy, perhaps fifteen years old, with a worn, hopeless face, from which every spark of youthful life and buoyancy seemed to have been ground out by the hard hand of abject poverty. The dull face lit up a little as his eye fell on the table, beside which his sister and Giuseppe were standing, with their eyes bright with delighted expectation of his surprise. But he only said slowly,

'Guess you've had a find.'

'No, we've had a present,' said Marie. 'Gossip's got a friend.'

Joe turned his heavy eyes on Giuseppe with a questioning look, cut a huge slice off the beef with an old clasp-knife that Marie had placed beside it, seized one of the chunks into which she had broken the loaf of bread, and began to eat voraciously.

But Giuseppe did not need anything more than that interrogative look; his tongue was easily loosed at all times, and he was quite accustomed to talking on in an uninterrupted stream to this silent listener. So his happy, musical lips played on in one unbroken chime, until his story had all been recited for the second time in every little detail. The description of 'Meester Pheelleeps' might not have been easily recognised even by that gentleman's nearest friends, for it was painted in almost angelic colours by his enthusiastically devoted admirer; but it served every purpose so far as Joe was concerned, and answered still another, in afford-

ing an outlet to the overflowing heart of the grateful boy.

'And I've got something to tell too,' said Marie, as soon as Giuseppe paused for breath. 'I have had a find after all, though it wasn't a basket of victuals. Guess what it is.'

'Ain't no hand at guessin', Mart.'

'Well, guess, any way. Do be alive, Joe ; can't you ?'

This dull, heavy brother of hers was a great trial of the flesh to the energetic, wide-awake girl ; and yet she had a pitying tenderness for him, too, rough as he was,—a tenderness which revealed itself the next moment in her tone and look, although her words were not over full of comfort and encouragement.

'Well, never mind ; you always was awful stupid, and you'll never be no better, I suppose. I found a baby.'

'In a barrel ?' asked Joe, without the least appearance of surprise.

The very question that Giuseppe had asked ; but, as digging in barrels was Marie's normal condition, this was not, perhaps, to be wondered at.

'No, in the street ; and I fetched it home, and I'm a goin' to keep it always.'

The last words were 'very peremptorily, perhaps even defiantly, spoken.

'And she name "Leetle Cousime,"' said Giuseppe, eagerly.

'Yes, Gossip has give her a name. Come and look at her.'

Marie led the way to the bureau. The tall, gawky figure had to bend very low to catch a distinct view of the tiny face nestling among the rags in the deep drawer ; but, uncomfortable as his position must have been, the



boy seemed in no haste to change it. He stood gazing down into the drawer, as if he never meant to lift his eyes from the beautiful sight.

It certainly was a curious picture to be seen in this room. For three years Marie and he had lived here in wretchedness and perfect squalour, with nothing in all their surroundings but rags and ugliness and filth. Nearly a year ago Giuseppe had broken in on the coarsely even tenor of their lives ; but his handsome little face was no more cleanly than their own, his rags no less miserable and forlorn. But now, here before his very eyes, so close that almost without moving he could touch it with his grimy fingers, lay a pure, lovely baby, that, but for its scanty dress of faded calico, looked as if it might have lain on a bed of roses all its sweet life. As fair as a lily, as fresh as a daisy, it looked as if the last place in all the wide world to which it should have been brought was this pent-up, meagre, dirty home of his, which never in all his life had looked so wretched and so dirt-begrimed as in the light which this little child threw upon it.

‘ Just touch her cheek, and see how soft it is,’ whispered Marie, delighted with his silent admiration of her *protégée*. Joe glanced at his hands.

‘ I ain’t fit, Mart. This ain’t no place for the likes of her. Where did she come from !’

Marie told him the true state of the case, and then instructed him, as she had already instructed Giuseppe, as to the tale that was to be told outside. To watch her as she stood beside him, with her hand upon his shoulder, earnestly impressing upon him the falsehood which she wished him to tell, one would never have imagined that the girl’s whole mind and soul were engrossed in the carrying out of a plan of deception and wrong.

To her it was no wrong. Already the tender heart, which, in spite of hardship, poverty, and want, beat within her with a motherly affection for all that was helpless and forlorn, had wrapped this little stray waif in a mantle of love; and she would have been ready to sacrifice anything to its comfort and its care. The cold, starving life to which she was condemning it had been hers always: she knew no better, and so failed utterly to appreciate its misery. And then she had saved the baby from the 'Perlice,' those (as Marie considered them) enemies to the human race, the terrors of whose grasp had often deterred her from replenishing her empty larder at the expense of the butchers and bakers, whose treasures of good things, inexhaustible in Marie's hungry eyes, seemed to her most unjustly apportioned.

And as to the falsehood which she intended to circulate, if there were anything to be gained by a lie, why should she hesitate to tell it? The thought of its sin and its shame never entered her mind. No one had ever taught her that a lie was a mean, disgraceful thing; no one had ever spoken to her of its hatefulness and sin: why should she refrain from lying, if she could win anything by concealing the truth?

Even dull Joe laughed a little over Marie's account of 'Mees Schort' and 'Leetle Cousime;' it seemed as if already the child had brought sunshine into the new home to which she had come.

'I tell you, she's brought us good luck,' said Marie, pleased with Joe's unexpected interest. 'First of all, there was the basket of victuals that the gentleman gave Gossip, comin' to hand most as soon as I got her into the house; such a luck never happened to us before. And now, here's Joe a smilin' at her; and I'm sure I don't

ever mind of his smilin' this year back. Are you goin' out again, Joe ?'

'Yes. There's a rat fight up to Ward's. Want to go ?'

'Oh, no ! I must stay and mind baby.'

'Gossip, want to see a fight ?'

'No,' said Giuseppe, with a visible shudder. 'Him nasty. Me stay wiz Marie. Me no like him.'

So Joe went out alone to one of the wretched haunts where he spent his evenings. All day he worked in a paper factory, busy through the long hours with a preparation of arsenic, which was slowly poisoning his poor, weak body, wasting his young life little by little ; and nearly all night he breathed in even a subtler poison, a deadly draught which wasted his very heart and soul.

Fortunately for Giuseppe, his more sensitive nature shrank from the revolting sights and sounds to which Joe was completely hardened. And, even when the whole trio were driven by the cold and dampness of their cheerless room to the warm shelter of some of these dens of wickedness, the Italian boy would find a corner at the farthest possible distance from the low plays or struggles which went on around him, often hiding his eyes in utter disgust from scenes into which even Marie entered with zest and enjoyment. Through the summer which he had spent with her, Marie had yielded almost invariably to his persuasions to avoid these horrible places ; and now, when the warmth and comparative comfort they afforded proved a great temptation to her, she very often remained at home with him, the boy almost always preferring the freezing atmosphere of the garret to the sights which he must witness in order to obtain more comfortable quarters.

#### IV.

##### MR. PHILLIPS' OFFICE-BOY.

THERE was, perhaps, scarcely a young man in New York whose general character, habits, and inclinations would have made him a more unpromising subject to whom to prefer such an appeal as that of Giuseppe Antronelli than Mr. Austin Phillips. Wholly given up to his business and his pleasures, he had no time nor thoughts to spare for those who were less happily situated in this life than himself; and it was simply Giuseppe's unique style of begging which had impelled him to do such an unusual and disagreeable thing as to listen to the story of a mendicant of any description.

On the morning of his appointment with the Italian boy he was sitting in his office, talking with a friend on business matters; and as the gentleman rose to take his leave, making some allusion to the hour, the recollection of his engagement with Giuseppe flashed across Mr. Phillips' mind.

'Oh, by the by, Frank,' he said, carelessly, 'I have an appointment for this morning which is rather more in your line than in mine.'

'What is that?' asked his friend.

'Well, I made a call in Baxter Street a day or two since, and the gentleman whom I visited is to return the compliment this morning. Wait a few minutes and see him: you will take a fancy to him, as I did. He

is certainly the cutest little specimen of a beggar that I ever came across. I met him—there's a knock now at the outer door. I expect the Signor has arrived. Come in !'

The door leading from the larger office into the hall was slowly opened ; a step, evidently that of a child, crossed the floor a short distance, and paused undecidedly in the centre of the room.

'Is that you, Giuseppe?' said Mr. Phillips from the inner office, as the footsteps came to a stand-still. 'Come in here.'

'Ah, Meester Pheelleeps!' cried Giuseppe, eagerly, recognising his voice instantly ; and the next moment he stood at his patron's side, bending to kiss his hand with the same graceful inclination which had before attracted the gentleman's attention.

'Well, my little man, how fares it in Baxter Street?' asked Mr. Phillips, releasing his hand with a somewhat embarrassed air from the boy's grasp. 'How is Signora Marie? Is she in a better humour this morning, or would she turn me out of doors again if I were to make her another visit?'

Giuseppe had been watching his friend's face very anxiously, only half understanding his words, but quite comprehending his general meaning. The last question was, however, perfectly intelligible to him ; and his dark eyes filled with sudden tears, as he said earnestly,

'Oh, Meester Pheelleeps, dear Meester Pheelleeps, Marie is so sorry ; she nevere do so no more, nevere. Don't tell me 'bout dat day, nevere any more ; he makes big pain here when you tell me 'bout him,' and he laid his brown hand on his throat. 'Somesing come here and hurt so bad when I sink 'bout Marie dat day. She

nevare do so some more. She be so glad to see you 'noder day.'

'I don't know that I'll try her again,' said Mr. Phillips, laughing. 'Perhaps I'll ask my friend, Mr. Tuttle, to see what he can make of her,' he added, with a slight gesture toward the gentleman who stood near him.

Giuseppe looked up into the pleasant face above him, and it met his smile so kindly that the boy was won to it at once.

'Suppose we enter into a partnership, Tuttle,' continued Mr. Phillips, in a bantering tone. 'I had half intended to adopt this small foreigner, not as my son and heir, but in a general sort of way, you know. If I install him here as errand-boy, and look after his physical interests a little, will you do the moral and religious part for him? That is not much in my line, but it will be first-rate exercise for you; and I must say that I rather doubt whether Mademoiselle Marie's moral teachings are altogether beyond reproach. What do you say?'

Giuseppe had stood looking from one to the other of the two friends during Mr. Phillips' speech, with an expression of utter bewilderment upon his face; and now he glanced with an anxious look at Mr. Tuttle, as if in hope that he might give him some explanation of his patron's incomprehensible words. A dim idea that they were in some way assuming a complete proprietorship in him, a faint dread that they might be intending to place him in one of those 'sylums' of which Marie stood in such terror,—in fact, a general uneasiness and sense of coming trouble and danger were fast obtaining possession of the boy. A sudden thought that it might be best to make a rush to the door, and escape while yet there was time, flitted through

his disturbed mind ; but at that moment Mr. Tuttle, who had drawn a chair to Mr. Phillips' side, and seated himself between him and Giuseppe, laid his hand on his shoulder, saying kindly,

'Giuseppe must answer that question for me. What do you say ? will you take me for your teacher ? I think you do not quite understand Mr. Phillips,' he went on, as the boy looked at him with all his perplexity and uncertainty written on his face. 'If Mr. Phillips should give you a place here in his office to keep the rooms clean, and do his errands every day, would you try to do your work like an honest, true boy ?'

Giuseppe looked at his first friend, the rich colour flushing all over his countenance ; but that mocking smile was still dancing in the gentleman's eyes, and he was only half satisfied. Something was hanging over him still, mysterious and unexplained. There was Mr. Tuttle's own part of the compact ; what did that mean ?

'Well ?' said Mr. Tuttle, smiling, as the questioning eyes were turned back to him once more. 'What do you think about it ? Would you like to be Mr. Phillips' office-boy ?'

'To be all de day wiz Meester Pheelleps ?' asked Giuseppe, gravely.

'Yes.'

'And go home all de nights to mine Marie and Joe ?'

'I suppose so,' said Mr. Tuttle, with an interrogatory glance at his friend.

'Oh, yes ! I have no idea of housing the youngster,' said Mr. Phillips, with a laugh.

'You nevare put me in no 'sylum ?' questioned Giuseppe as gravely as ever.

'Certainly not, my boy.'

'Den what you do to me?'

'Phillips, you have utterly befogged this poor child,' said Mr. Tuttle, drawing the boy closer to him. 'Now listen to me, Giuseppe. All we want to know is, whether you would like to come here, and wait on Mr. Phillips every day. You shall go home every evening, and Mr. Phillips will pay you a little money for your work.'

'And what *you* do wiz me? Meester Pheelleeps say *you* do somesing wiz me. Me can nevere leave mine Marie; nevere any time. Me love she so great.'

'We shall never force you to leave your friends,' said Mr. Tuttle, beginning to understand the boy's fears. 'Mr. Phillips only asked me if I would teach you how to be faithful and true. He has been kind to you, and he means to be kinder still. You will want to be taught how to serve him rightly, won't you?'

'Me serve him wiz all mine heart,' said Giuseppe fervently. 'He much good to me.'

'Then all Mr. Phillips wants me to do is to teach you how to be an honest and trusty boy. We have a school near your home, and every Sunday a great many boys and girls come there to meet some ladies and gentlemen who teach them. Would you like to come?'

'And Marie and Joe?'

'Yes.'

'Yes; me come,' said Giuseppe, 'and me learn to do everysing for Meester Pheelleeps.'

'Well, now, about my part of the affair,' said Mr. Phillips. 'You don't look like a very respectable office-boy. We will have to alter your dress a little; that costume is rather airy. Suppose we start out this moment, and see how you would look in a decent suit of clothes.'



To Giuseppe's intense delight, the next hour found him dressed in a suit of dark grey clothes, with a new cap on his head, and new shoes and stockings on his feet. Truly a metamorphosed Giuseppe, for he really looked a little gentleman in his fine apparel. No words could express his happiness ; but his beaming face and sparkling eyes held gratitude enough to have satisfied a much more exacting benefactor than Mr. Phillips.

'There, there,' he said, as the boy seized his hand as they were leaving the store where their last purchase had been made ; 'we won't have any street demonstrations. We will go back to the office now, and you shall show me how thankful you are by doing just what I tell you to do, and doing it quickly and well. I want to help you if I can, but I can't have any young lazy-bones or trifter around my office. If I find you playing or idling in business hours, I shall have to let you go.'

This was the first time that morning that he had spoken with anything like seriousness to the child ; and now Giuseppe looked up into his grave face with a somewhat startled expression.

'Me try, me try—'

'Wait one moment.. Don't say "*me try* ;" say *I*. When you want to speak of yourself in that way, you must say *I* if you want to speak good English.'

'I try, Meester Phealleps. But I nevere be office-boy. How I do him ?' and he lifted up a very troubled face to his new friend, in spite of all the glories and delights which had been heaped upon head and feet and shoulders. He did so want to please him ; and he was quick enough to see that Mr. Phillips was one who judged by deeds far more than by words.

'You will not understand all at once,' said the gentle-

man kindly, seeing the boy's desire and anxiety in his eyes. 'I will have to teach you little by little; but, if you will really try to understand and to obey me, we shall have no trouble, for I shall not expect you to learn too quickly. First of all, we must get rid of this old fiddle. You have done with that sort of thing altogether,' and he laid his hand on the forlorn little tuneless instrument which Giuseppe still carried beneath his arm.

'My feedle!' cried the boy in perfect dismay. 'Me don't play my feedle any more? Den how I gets money for leetle Cousime? Mine Marie, when I come out she say, "Now, Giuseppe, you go to Meester Pheelleeps; den you come out and you plays very nice, just so nice as you can, and gets much pennies to buy milk for leetle Cousime." Mees Fairley, she gives me some milk dis mornin' for de baby; but she say me must give she de money dis night.'

'Why, who are all these new people?' asked Mr. Phillips in surprise. 'I thought that you and Marie and Joe made up the family. Who is—"Cousime," did you call her? And is there a baby?'

'De baby she is leetle Cousime, mine leetle Cousime. Marie say so.'

'But I did not know you had a baby in the family.'

'Oh! Marie she find—oh, no! de woman she give she to Marie when she go dead. Marie she be 'fraid you take de baby, Meester Pheelleeps, so she hide she in de drawer. Dat is why for she be so bad dat oder day. She 'fraid you hear dis baby cry when she no like to be in de drawer. But she be Marie's baby. De woman give she to Marie; you must not take she, Meester Pheelleeps.'

He shook his curly head very vehemently as he said the last words ; but there was a frightened look in his eyes, and his voice was very unsteady.

Mr. Phillips laughed out so merrily as to reassure him at once.

'Miss Marie need not have been anxious,' he said, looking down into the deprecating face. 'I have not the least intention of robbing her of her baby. What could have put such an idea into her head? Tell her she need never shut the poor thing up in a drawer again for fear of me ; I shall not touch her. So that was what ailed her yesterday, was it? What a curious character she is, to be sure ! But about this fiddle, Giuseppe. I really cannot consent to your playing in the streets any more. If I undertake to care for you, I cannot have you begging about the streets with a cracked fiddle. You don't even know how to play half a dozen notes. You could not play a tune through, could you?'

'Oh, I can schrape him,' said Giuseppe. 'See!' and he did 'schrape him' so sharply and raspingly that Mr. Phillips took the bow out of his hand in an instant.

'Scrape him you can ; there is no mistake about that,' he said, laughing. 'You are no musician, Giuseppe, so we will say good-bye to the old violin. Here we are at my office again. Run up, and we will see how far we can change this miserable life of yours.'

But such an unhappy face glanced up at him, as he and his little friend entered the office together, that he began to fear that the boy loved his street life better than he had supposed.

'How now?' he said impatiently ; for, although he had taken a great fancy to the young Italian, he was a man who hated to be opposed, and he considered that

having done, and intending to do, so much for him, the boy ought to yield to him without any demur. 'What is the trouble?'

'De milk for leetle Cousime,' and the tears fairly welled up and flowed over. 'O Meester Pheelleeps! don't sink me bad boy. You so good, so kind! But me cannot go to mine Marie wiz de nice clothes, and de nice hat, and de nice shoes, and say, "No; me no gets milk for leetle Cousime; me too beautiful boy now to play feedle for buy' milk for de lovely white baby,—so fair, so sweet!"' and he flung himself down in an agony of crying.

'Why, you poor little man,' said Mr. Phillips, touched by his unselfishness and his loyalty to his poor friends in the midst of his own prosperity. 'You shall have the money for the baby's milk. I mean to pay you a little money every day for the work you do for me, and you shall use it for the baby and Marie if you choose. Now come; I want to send you right out on an errand. Let me see how well you can do it.'

As Mr. Phillips spoke, he moved away toward his desk; but the next instant he turned again quickly, startled by a sudden noise of something snapping and crashing. Giuseppe stood where he had left him, his foot upon his fiddle, which lay upon the floor, crushed to atoms.

'Giuseppe!'

But, before he had time for another word, the boy was at his side, saying earnestly,

'Dere, Meester Pheelleeps, dis is de way I am your boy. You say, "Do dis, Giuseppe." I do him. You see? You say, "Must not say *me*, must say *I*;" so me say *I*. You say, "Bad play in de street, bad feedle;"

den me kill feedle. Dere is now no more feedle ; dere is only Giuseppe to serve Meester Pheelleeps, to kiss his hand.'

Mr. Phillips turned back to his desk without a word, but he cleared his throat once or twice as he fumbled among his papers.

'Do you know how to go to Wall Street from here?' he asked, after a little silence.

'Yes ; I know,' said the boy.

'But when you speak to me or to any other gentleman you must say "sir."'

'Sir, yes ; I know,' said Giuseppe, obediently.

Mr. Phillips laughed, and handed him a package of papers, giving him very explicit directions as to where he was to deliver them, and bidding him ask the gentleman to whom they were to be taken to give him a receipt for them, in order that he might be sure that he made no mistake.

That errand, and three or four similar to it, were well and quickly done, and Mr. Phillips sent his office-boy home at sunset with fifty cents in his pocket, and as happy as a king, his master having told him as he bade him good-night, that if he were always so intelligent and obedient he could ask nothing more.

## V.

### CHANGES AT HOME.

'GOSSIP! Gossip Pantell!' cried Marie, as Mr. Phillips' office-boy rushed in upon her, and, having flung his arms about her neck, and given her a most vehement kiss, began to dance around the room in the exuberance of his joy. 'What are you about? and whose clothes is those? and where have you been? Do stop, child! Are you gone crazy? Why, Gossip Pantell!'

For, whirling around with a sudden spring, he had reached her side once more, and, leaning over the baby, who lay on her lap screaming and kicking with delight at Giuseppe's wild performances, he pressed into her chubby little fist fifty cents.

'Tis fer Cousime,' he said, laughing merrily at Marie's amazed look. 'Meester Pheelleeps give me nice clothes, and shoes and hat, and money for milk for Cousime! Oh, mine good Meester Pheelleeps! I love he, Marie! I love he so much!' and he spread out his arms to their utmost extent.

But to his astonishment Marie only said, 'Oh, Gossip!' and bent her head down over the baby.

He stood and looked at her for a moment in bewildered surprise. Then all at once the truth flashed on his mind, and, with ready tact, he whispered to the baby,

'I have so much friends, little Cousime, so much good friends. Mine Marie—she find poor boy and love he; oh, she mine much good friend! And Cousime, and Joe,

and den Meester Pheelleeps—and—Oh, Marie! dere is 'noder one I find dis day, Meester Tootle.'

Marie had watched him closely as he talked to the baby. This plain-featured, rough girl was as sensitive where her affections were concerned as the most delicately nurtured woman in the world, and as proud as well. Not for worlds would she have appealed to this boy, upon whom she had lavished such a large share of her big heart, for the first place in his own; but now that he lifted his face from the baby to her, she leaned toward him, and, taking his brown cheeks between her hands, said earnestly,

'True and honest, now, Gossip; do you like me better than Mr. Phillips?'

'Yes, mine Marie, better as Meester Pheelleeps, better as all de world, better as every sing!'

'I'll trust you,' and Marie laughed happily, her jealous fears all put to flight by the honest love shining on her from those bright eyes. 'I won't never mistrust you agen; but you see, you was so rich and so fine, I was afraid you'd get above me and Joe with all these grand big friends. You're awful lucky, Gossip. Mr. Phillips must be a trump. Did he buy those things and put 'em on you just for a notion he'd took to you?'

'Notion?' repeated Giuseppe inquiringly. Marie did use so many words which perplexed him sorely in his imperfect knowledge of English.

'A likin', I mean. Did he do all because he liked you?'

'Me don't know if he like me so good. Me try, Marie, me try good to be nice boy; but he give me all dese 'fore I try. Den when I comes home he gives me money for Cousime 'cause I breaks mine feedle.'

'Broke your fiddle? How?' exclaimed Marie in great concern.

'Jumps on he, kicks he. Meester Pheelleeps don't like he, so I kill he. Den Meester Pheelleeps give me money for Cousime dis day; 'noder day, he say, too.'

'You mean he is goin' to give you money every day?' and Marie's eyes opened very wide.

'Yes; so much as dis when I be good boy for him.'

'And you are to go to him every day?'

'Yes, and be his boy. Me go so soon in de day, eight o'clock. I sweeps de floor, and make him clean. Den I fedder all de sings wiz a big brush wiz fedders. Den Meester Pheelleeps will come, and he send me out, one time, two times, many times so as he likes. Den when I come in I get a leetle book wiz letters and picshures, and I learn to read. Meester Pheelleeps say so.'

'Why! Gossip Pantell!'

That was as near as Marie's stiff tongue could come to the pronunciation of Giuseppe's musical name; but it was all the same to him. She sat looking at him for a moment as she had done before, doubtfully, painfully even. These new friends of his had so much to give him, and she had nothing.

'Gossip,' she said at last, almost in a whisper, 'did they say anything to you about—about leavin' me; gettin' a better home, you know?'

'No, nossin' at all. I nevare get 'noder home but mine Marie; nevare, nevare!' and he threw his arms around her neck again. 'Tis good home! 'Tis nice home! Me—'

He had turned as if to survey the imaginary beauties of the room, and was suddenly struck with its strange



appearance, which, rushing in so full of news, he had failed to notice on his entrance.

‘Why, Marie, how he is clean and nice!—and you is nice! Your hair is smooove, and oh! a ribbon on him!’ he added, taking hold of the long braid into which Marie’s usually dishevelled locks had been woven. ‘You find him in a bar’l?’

‘No; Annie Farley gave it to me. It was the baby made me do it. It seemed like the room wasn’t fit for her. So this mornin’, after you was gone, I got her to sleep, and then I set to work and cleaned house. Didn’t I poke out heaps of dirt, though? Why, it was enough to choke you when I swep’ up. It waked baby, and I had to take her down and get Annie Farley to tend her till I was done. Miss Farley seemed real glad I was doin’ it; and she showed me how to fill in them broken panes with stiff paper, ‘stead o’ the old rags—see! She give me the paper, and showed me how to paste it in. I cleaned out the old burer too. Oh, you’d oughter seen the spiders run when I got at it! Then, when the room was fixed, I felt to be so awful dirty myself. So I washed me, and washed all my clothes (Annie lent me some to put on ‘tween whiles); and she combed my head, and found me this bit of ribbon. I told you the other night that baby’d brought us luck.’

‘’Tis so nice,’ said Giuseppe, with another admiring glance. ‘Dear leetle Cousime! She shall have plenty milk. Meeester Pheelleeps say so.’

‘Did you tell him about her?’ asked Marie, in sudden terror.

‘Yes, and he laugh; oh, he laugh big when I tell he you ‘fraid he take she! He say, “No, no, I don’t want she!” He say, “Tell Marie don’t put de baby in de

drawer 'noder day ; I don't want she." Den when I come home he give me de money to buy milk for she.'

'Then it's all fixed up beautiful,' said Marie, with great satisfaction, 'for I've told all the folks in the house about Aunt Scott, and they ain't none of them mistrusted a thing. Miss Farley wanted me to put her over to the almshus, but I told her I'd promised Aunt Scott faithful to keep her, if I could any ways do it. And then I let on as I was cryin' about it ; and she's so softly hearted, you know, that just took her down, and she said, "Well, keep it then," and she'd help me all she could. So she's mine ; ain't you, my sweet, my little bit of baby ?'

She lifted the child up in her arms, and held it to her heart ; and the little thing nestled close, and patted her neck with its tiny hand. What did it care if its loving nurse was poor and ignorant, or if its home was a ruinous, dilapidated room ? It had never known anything better ; and so long as it had food and warmth and shelter, and was tended by gentle hands, softened by love, it was a happy little baby.

'Joe is dreadful late,' said Marie, as Giuseppe came into the room once more, having been down to the store to repay Mrs. Farley for the credited 'dip' and milk, and to purchase another supply of the latter article, and something for the general supper.

'He is here. He comes in de door when me—I—am on de stair. He comes very slow dis night.'

'Yes, he comes slower and slower every night. Something ails Joe, Gossip. I'm beginnin' to get worrited of him. Whatever should we do, Gossip, if he upped and died on us ?'

'Oh, Marie !' exclaimed the startled boy.

'I do be real afeared of it sometimes,' said Marie. 'He looks so awful white, and he drags around so, poor chap. But then, agen, I think it's only his stupidity; he always was so dull-like. He's never had no get on in him. Don't say nothin' to him, though. Here he is.'

He came up with his heavy, lumbering tread, and stood in the doorway looking at them with a vacant, helpless look, as if not more than half sure that he knew who they were.

'Why, come on, Joe; what ails you?' said Marie, sharply (she was always sharp when she was anxious). 'What are you starin' at?'

'Oh!' said Joe, very meekly. 'I dunno as nothin' ails me—only—I'm tired,' and he sank down weakly on the straw bed in the corner.

'Somethin' does ail you. What is it?' and Marie hurried toward him. 'You look as if you was like to die.'

'No, I ain't; I'm only beat out. Let me go to sleep, Mart. It's Saturday night, and I ain't got to work—no more—till Monday.'

'No, 'tain't Saturday night, neither; it's only a Friday.'

'Well,' said Joe, sleepily, closing his heavy eyes.

'Don't, Joe, don't be so stupid,' said Marie. 'Sit up and eat a bit of supper first, anyway. And you ain't kissed baby. See, she wants to kiss you.'

She held the child down toward him, but Joe moved his head aside.

'Don't, Mart; I'm awful dirty. Well,'—and he struggled up with a great effort, and sat on the side of the bed. 'Give me a sup o' water, Gossip, till I wash up a bit.'

But before Giuseppe had time to fulfil this unheard-of request, Joe was prostrate upon the bed once more.

'Here, Gossip, you take Cousime, and I'll wash off his face and hands ; maybe it'll 'liven him up.'

So Marie set to work in her own energetic fashion, and at length, by dint of hard scrubbing and persistent talking, fairly roused poor Joe to listen to her recital of the exciting occurrences of the day, and in some measure to comprehend them.

'There, now, look up and see Gossip in his fine new clothes,' she said in conclusion, still rubbing away most vigorously at his hands, which probably had never in his life been so clean before. 'Ain't he a pictur' to look at ?'

Giuseppe stood up before him, pleased and proud.

'And Marie too,' he said eagerly. 'See how nice Marie is, wiz clean dress and wiz ribbons. She is so clean as leetle Cousime.'

'Well, you see,' said Marie, apologetically, as if her unusual neatness were a thing to be palliated and excused, 'I couldn't abear to be tendin' baby and me so dirty. And Miss Farley, she told me that if baby wasn't kep' clean she'd take sick, and maybe die ; so I had to make it decent around, and tidy myself some. And now here's Joe a gettin' washed up too ! Why, we won't know ourselves soon,' and she laughed out merrily. 'And, O Joe ! Gossip's to get fifty cents a day, a workin' out at Mr. Phillipse's. We'll be able to have a fire every day when it gets colder. Won't that be fine ?'

'Ye-es,' said Joe, slowly. 'Is there a bite to eat ?'

'Yes, indeed. We've got a half a mackerel, and an onion around, 'sides a loaf o' bread. Oh ! we're elegant in these days, I tell you ! Sit up now, like a man.

There !' and she dragged him into a sitting posture. 'Now, Gossip, give baby to me, and hand over the victuals. Joe feels lots better. Here, baby, kiss Joey.'

The boy turned his face toward the child, and kissed the sweet red lips ; but the next moment he sank heavily against Marie's shoulder ; and although, when she put a morsel of food to his lips, he made an effort to swallow it, she could not rouse him sufficiently to persuade him to take anything into his own hand. So she fed him as if he were a little child, and, when he would take no more, lifted his heavy head and laid it down upon their one pillow, as gently as if it were Cousine herself whom she was putting to her rest for the night. Then she sang the child to sleep upon her breast, and laid her softly down on the rags in the drawer of the old bureau ; and she and Giuseppe crept to bed very quietly, fearful of disturbing Joe.

But Joe slept on through the night, and through the morning too. The sharp, bleak wind of the earlier part of the week had been followed by a day or two of very mild weather ; and on this Saturday morning the sun shone brightly into the old garret room. But it did not disturb Joe's slumbers ; nor could Marie, by any amount of shaking, calling, expostulations, or, at last, vehement scolding, induce him to rise and go to his work. Once or twice he opened his eyes, and muttered some unintelligible answer to her persuasion or commands ; but, for the most part, he lay deaf and immoveable as a stone.

In despair, Marie went down at last to Mrs. Farley, who came up and looked pitifully at the grey-white face upon the pillow, and bade her let him sleep on.

'But he'll lose his week's pay,' said Marie, anxiously.

She did love her brother, poor girl ; but a week's pay

means so much to people like Marie and Joe. Sometimes it means all the difference between life and death.

'Maybe not, child,' said the kindly hearted woman. 'Do you run up yourself to Mr. Stafford's place, and tell him Joe's took sick, and ask him will he pay you his wage. He knows you, and I think likely he'll give it; and if he don't, there's Gossip in a good place now. Anyways, he can't do a stroke the day, poor boy; he just ain't got it in him.'

So all day long Joe lay on the bed, never once opening his eyes save when Mrs. Farley came up at mid-day with a big bowl of hot soup, and, raising him on her arm, made him drink it whether he would or no.

'It's a'most mornin', ain't it?' he muttered, as she laid him down again. 'I'm awful tired.'

'Well, lie still, Joey, till you're clean rested out,' she said, kindly.

But he was sound asleep again, and did not hear her.

Marie's errand to the paper factory was fortunately successful. Joe's employer paid her his five days' wages, and promised to keep his place for him for at least two days; and, satisfied with that, Marie walked home again with her baby on her arm, quite content. It was well for her that the day was mild; for her shawl was of the thinnest, and her ragged calico dress was little protection against such winds as had rushed through the city in the earlier part of the week. But now she walked along quite comfortably, singing as she went; and the wee face that looked out of the hood made by the shawl which she had pinned over the baby's head was as bright as her own.

Carefully avoiding the street in which she had found the child, with the idea that some one might possibly

recognise it, and deny her story concerning it, she went on for some considerable distance, in order to let it have the benefit of the sweet, sunny air.

'What's this?' she said to herself, pausing before a long wooden building, and looking up at a sign hung out between two of the windows on the second floor. 'S-c-h-o-o-l. Oh, school! S-a-b-b-a-t-h. Sabbath! Sabbath school! Maybe that'll be the one Gossip's goin' to to-morrow. I'd kind-o' like to go. I wonder if they'd let me bring baby. But then somebody might see her as knowed her, and get her took away to the Island or somewhere. No, we won't go, baby; we'll stay home, won't we?' and she gazed lovingly down into the be-hooded little face, and Cousime laughed up into her eyes, and gurgled and cooed until she caught her to her in a paroxysm of delight and affection.

'That is a beautiful little baby,' said a voice close beside her. 'Is it your sister?'

Marie looked up with a start. A gentleman stood at her side, looking at her with a smile on his pleasant face.

'You seem to be very fond of her,' he said, as the girl looked at him without replying to his former question.

'Yes; I love her very dear,' said Marie. 'She's my cousin; but she really belongs to me, for my aunt gave her to me. She died a few days back, and she had no one to leave her to but me.'

She told the falsehood as boldly and unhesitatingly as if it had been the entire truth. Indeed she had already repeated it so often that she had almost persuaded herself that it was not wholly false.

'Poor little thing!' said the gentleman, pityingly. 'Her father and mother are both dead, then? Have you a mother?'

'No;' said Marie, ignoring the first question. 'I ain't got no mother, nor father neither; but we get's along pretty good. I've got a brother who's sick now, but who works most days; and then a boy we picked up and took care on, a furriner boy, has just got a good place with a man in a office.'

'Why, perhaps I know him,' said the gentleman. 'Is his name Giuseppe Antronelli?'

'Yes.'

'Then you are Marie,—his friend, his sister almost?'

'Yes. How did you come to know him?'

'I met him in Mr. Phillips' office.'

'Oh, then you're Mr. Tootle, are you?'

'Mr. Tuttle; yes. Giuseppe promised to come to my Sunday school, which is just above here,' and he pointed toward the building which had attracted Marie's attention. 'Will you come too,—you and your brother?'

'Perhaps,' said Marie, 'if I can get somebody to tend baby. I'll see. I don't know but I'd like it for a change.'

'I am sure you would.'

'I'm kind o' glad I seen you,' said Marie, frankly, as she prepared to move away. 'Gossip's taken quite a shine to you, and I wanted to know what you was like. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye,' said Mr. Tuttle, smiling. 'I shall expect you at half-past two to-morrow afternoon.'

'All right. I'll come if I can,' replied rough Marie; and she turned away, quite determined, if Joe would care for little Cousine, to go with Giuseppe on the morrow, and see for herself what a Sunday school was like.



## VI.

### 'A MAN GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ME.'

THE Sabbath morning dawned very brightly ; and Giuseppe, who had lain down the night before in a perfect state of delight over Marie's story of her meeting with Mr. Tuttle, and her half promise to accompany him to the Sunday school on the next day, sprang up from the rough bed where he had slept beside Joe, to find the sun shining on his face, and Marie kindling a little fire on the hearth.

'Whisht, Gossip, don't waken Joe,' she said, as the boy whistled to little Cousime, who lay kicking and cooing on the floor. 'Miss Farley bid me make him a cup of tea first thing this mornin'; so I'm makin' up a bit of fire, and I want him to sleep till it's all ready. Dear me, Gossip, whatever would we have done if you hadn't come across Mr. Phillips, with Joe like this? He do look awful this mornin'.'

'Dis nice sunny make he all well,' said Giuseppe, hopefully. 'Tis beautiful dis day, Marie.'

It was indeed a beautiful day,—one of those sudden surprises which come to us sometimes in dull November, when it seems as if the summer ran back to give us one last kiss before she leaves us to the cold embrace of the winter. Even in that dilapidated garret room it was warm and bright, the tiny fire which Marie had built up to boil her tin cup full of water being amply sufficient to take off the slight chill of the morning air.

Joe wakened after a little, and, although he was not able to rise, he seemed a little less dull than on the preceding day; and Marie began to hope that, as Giuseppe said, the 'sunny' might make him well. To Giuseppe's joy, she still held to her intention to go to the school in the afternoon; and not only so, but she tried to persuade Joe to make an effort to go also: that was of no avail. The poor fellow roused himself to take the tea she had made for him, but he would eat nothing; and, if Marie had but known it, the slight flush which was creeping into his cheeks, and slowly replacing the pallor which had so distressed her, was only a banner flung out by the slow fever which had set in, and which would soon burn away the little remnant of strength left in his exhausted frame. But Marie was quite too ignorant even to suspect anything of that kind; and, as the flush deepened on Joe's face, and he began to talk a little, her spirits rose higher and higher.

'Come now, Joe,' she said, coaxingly, as the time drew near for them to start for the school, 'let's all go together. I'll take Cousime down to Miss Farley, and we'll all go around to see the Sunday school. Can't you 'liven up a bit and get around there? Me and Gossip 'll walk either side of you, and you can lean on us. Come on.'

'No,' said Joe, wearily; 'I'd as lieve lie here. You go ahead, you two. But don't take the babby; leave her here, 'side of me.'

'And you take care on her?' asked Marie in surprise.

'Yes; she'll be easy, and I like to feel her and to look at her.'

After a while, finding all persuasion vain, Marie made herself ready, and, seating the baby upon the bed beside the sick boy, went out with Giuseppe. Annie Farley

had lent her a hat, and a shawl which served to hide the worst deficiencies of her dress ; and so, with the 'sunny' on their faces and in their hearts, the two friends set off for the Sunday school.

When they were gone, Joe turned himself heavily over upon his side toward the baby. She clapped her tiny hands, and laughed up into his dull eyes when he talked to her, though all he said to her was, 'Pretty baby ; pretty little white baby !' and by and by, growing tired of playing with his long thin hand, which was her only plaything, she sank down with her head upon his breast, and fell fast asleep. And he lay there, whispering softly, to himself more than to her,—'Pretty baby—too pretty for us—too sweet for us,' touching her soft cheek and pure forehead with gentle, tender touches, happy and content, poor boy.

About an hour and a half slipped by, and still he lay there quite contented and comfortable, when the sound of Marie's voice on the stairs roused him.

'Back a'ready ?' he said quite brightly, as she came in with Giuseppe.

'Yes ; and oh, Joe, it's just splendid ! You'd oughter go next Sunday. There's singin'—oh, splendid singin' ! and they tell you stories, and talk real nice to you. There was lots of folks there,—ladies and gentlemen, and heaps of children, some decenter than us, and some just as ragged, and dirtier than we are to-day. And they gave me this card ; see, ain't it pretty ? And they gave me this book ; it's got jolly pictures, all painted green and yaller and blue and everything ; only I've got to bring it back next Sunday, but I'll get another. And Gossip's got one too. How's baby been ? Good ? Well, I declare, if she ain't asleep ! You're a good nuss.

No, she ain't either, or she's just wakin' up. Baby, baby, don't you want to go to Sunday school some day? Oh, see her rise her leg at me! She's gettin' real lively on her legs. Come to Marty, baby, come along!' and she lifted Cousime in her arms, ending her nearly breathless harangue by almost smothering her with kisses.

But it was all the same to little Cousime. Life was all sunshine to her; and whether she lay on her heap of rags in the bureau-drawer, or poked her tiny fingers into Joe's mouth and eyes, or frolicked and played with Giuseppe, or was devoured with love by Marie, still she kicked and crowed and laughed, the happiest baby in all Christendom.

Marie's rapid, vehement speech had fairly bewildered Joe's weak head, and he lay for some moments with his eyes closed, while she sat on the floor playing with the baby; and Giuseppe, in a most unusual state of quietude, seated himself upon the side of the bed.

'That's uncommon,' said Joe at last, very slowly.

'What you say, Joe?' asked Giuseppe, with a start.

'You're so uncommon quiet like. Didn't you like it so good as Mart?'

'Yes, I like him. Joe,' and he looked earnestly into his face, 'Joe, a man gave his life for me.'

'Wha-at?' drawled poor Joe, stupidly.

'A man—He name Jesus Christ—He gave His life for me, Joe. Meester Tootle tell me so. And He love me; He love me now.'

Even Joe was roused a little, the boy was so eager. His dark face was all aglow as he told his simple story, and his black eyes shone and sparkled; yet there was a strange stillness about him too. But a difficulty presented itself at once to Joe's mind.

'A man died for you!' he said slowly; 'and he loves you now! What are you talkin' about, Gossip?' and he actually turned his head to look into Giuseppe's face. 'That's a queer yarn.'

'Meester Tootle tell me so,' said Giuseppe, simply. 'I do so many bad sings, and God—Joe, dere is big God up dere,' and he pointed upward; 'and He angry wiz me, and He say, "Bad Giuseppe." Den Jesus Christ, He say, "'Tis mine Giuseppe; don't hurt he. I be hurt, not Giuseppe; and I make he good boy." Den de men kill He, and He go to Heaven, and—and—I cannot tell, Joe—Meester Tootle he can tell; but God love me, and Jesus Christ love me, and me must be good boy. Me must not tell lies, no; and me must not take 'noder big bread out de cart when de man is in de house. Jesus Christ say, "No, Giuseppe, mine Giuseppe must not do so. I love he, I give my life for he; he must be good."''

'Hearken to Gossip, Mart,' said Joe, a slow smile creeping over his face.

'Yes, I heard him a talkin',' said Marie. 'I don't rightly understand it. The lady what teachd me, she said as how we'd oughter be true, and honest, and all that, you know. It's all well enough to talk; but when a body hain't got a penny, nor a morsel to eat, and one's nigh clemmed with hunger, 'taint quite so easy to walk a past a cart full o' bread, when there's nobody by to give you over to the perlice if you lift a finger to it. But we're all right now—ain't we, baby?—with Gossip's fifty cents a day and what I can scrape, even if Joe can't work for a spell. We're all right. And as for lyin', why, you can't always help it. However, we'll jog along the best we can. I'd like to please these folks, for they're right nice and kindly.'

Tired with the unusual excitement of the day, and the strange new thoughts which its events had called up in his mind, Giuseppe had thrown himself down beside Joe early in the evening. Marie lay in her closet, dreaming happily, with Cousine upon her arm, and only Joe was awake. Joe was dreaming also, though no refreshing sleep came to soothe and rest his weary head and aching limbs; dreaming happily, too. By and by, Marie wakened suddenly, with a sense of responsibility and uneasiness, and, raising herself on her elbow, listened to hear again the rustling sound which had roused her.

'Is that you, Gossip?' she whispered, as Joe's movements again rustled the straw upon which he lay.

'It's me, Mart. Gossip's sound.'

'What's the matter? Can't you get asleep?'

'No; but 'tain't no odds.'

'Why, it must be most mornin'.'

'Yes; it's struck three on Miss Farley's clock.'

'And you ain't had a wink yet, you poor old chap?' and Marie came out of her closet and seated herself on the bedside. 'What'll I do with you?'

'Oh, no matter, I don't feel much bad, only my legs ache awful. I've been a thinkin' about Gossip's man, Mart. Ain't it queer? Do you believe it, or has he got mixed up, like he does sometimes through not understandin' our words?'

'I don't know. My teacher was a tellin' some such thing to us, I believe. But I was a lookin' at the girls' bunnets, and wonderin' whether I'd ever get one of me own, and I think I kind of lost it. But I do mind of her saying somethin' about some man's dyin'. I mind that quite clear. I'll ask her about it next Sunday, if you like. Gossip seems to have gone clean daft about

it. He's just as took up with it as can be. He can't talk about nothin' else.'

'He's a queer little chap,' said Joe slowly; 'he gets such a heap of good out of things.'

'Yes; he believes everything so hard. But, Joe, what's got into you to make you talk so, and think too? Why, I didn't know you ever did think.'

'I don't know as ever I did afore, Mart; but Gossip's story did it, I s'pose. I've been a wonderin' too, Mart—a wonderin' how we ever got alive.'

'Why, we was borned, I s'pose; folks mostly is.'

'Yes, but what for, I mean. What's the good of us livin'?''

'Well, I don't mind it,' said Marie, clasping her arms around her knees; 'I like livin', I think.'

'Well, yes; you're some good, you see. You picked up Gossip, and now the babby. They'd both died, I s'pose, if it warn't for you; but I ain't no good to nobody.'

'No, not much,' said Marie, candidly; 'but then you're just our old stupid Joe, you know, and I don't know how we'd get along without you. Don't talk about not livin', Joe; I don't like it.'

'Would you care, Mart, really? I didn't know as you would; and I've been thinkin' as I was a lyin' here as how it was a great bother to live, and a feller might as well give it up fust as last, and stop all the diggin' and strivin'.'

'Joe! don't, old Joe!' and rough, coarse Marie laid her arm about his neck, and her face to his. 'You ain't a dyin', nor nothin' like it. We'll get the doctor to you to-morrow. You'll get well, all right. Don't go and die on me, Joe, and us two been together so long.'

'Marty!' he said appealingly, lifting his weak hand to wipe away the tears which were raining down her face. 'Why, Marty, I never thought as you'd take it so hard, poor old girl. Never mind; I'll be better by mornin', maybe. Only I felt like it warn't in me to get strong again, and I didn't know as it 'ud make any odds if I didn't.'

'We'll get the doctor to you to-morrow, Joe,' said Marie, lifting her head, and dashing away her tears. 'I'd oughter gone to the 'spensary to-day or yesterday. Will I make you another bilin' o' tea? Your face is as cold as anythin', and your hands too.'

'No; I don't want nothin'. I'm easy enough. Maybe I'll drop off asleep.'

She brought her ragged shawl, in which she had wrapped herself when she lay down in the evening, and spread it over the old coverlet with which he was already protected.

'What have you got for yourself now?' asked Joe, as she tucked it close around his thin shoulders.

'Oh, I've got enough besides,' she said, propping his head a little higher with a bundle of rags from Cousime's curious cradle.

And when he was comfortable she crept back to her closet, and lay, with no cover but her scanty garments, on the hard floor, crying softly lest she should disturb him. She knew very little about illness, poor child, but the touch of that cold, wet face against her own told her all she needed to know.

Nor did the morning bring her much comfort; for when she rose and went again to Joe's side, she found that the heavy stupor in which he had lain on Saturday had again fallen upon him, and nothing that she could



do to rouse him had the slightest effect. He lay there white and cold, breathing very loudly; and although he opened his eyes once or twice when she called his name, he did not attempt to speak.

'I must have the doctor to him, Gossip,' she said, as they stood together looking in helpless distress at the quiet figure on the bed. 'I'll take Cousime down to Miss Farley, and ask her to take care of her till he's been, lest he should meddle about her. Miss Farley won't mistrust nothin', 'cause I'll tell her baby disturbs Joe.'

Giuseppe looked up at her with a curious expression on his face.

'Leetle Cousime do not disturb Joe, Marie,' he said.

'Oh, no! I know she don't; he likes her funny little noises. But I'll just say so to Miss Farley, so she won't suspicion anything.'

'Marie,' and he laid his brown hand entreatingly on her arm, 'don't say lies. Meester Tootle he say, "Don't say lies."'

'Gossip Pantell! What do you mean?' and, seizing him by the shoulder, she shook him angrily, while a look of terror shot through the passion which had suddenly darkened her face. 'Do you mean to say you ain't goin' to stand by me and baby? Do you mean you're goin' to tell on us, you little wretch?'

Marie's temper was very violent, and if suddenly excited was apt to pass all bounds. Now, as she stood over the boy, grasping his shoulders with either strong hand, shaking him fiercely with every question, her eyes fairly glaring upon him in her passion, she looked a perfect fury. Giuseppe gazed at her for a moment in helpless, confused amazement. Often as he had seen

her attack others in his defence, she had never before laid her hand upon him in anger; and he was at first so astonished and bewildered by her violence that he simply stood still, and let the storm sweep over him without making the slightest resistance.

But that was by no means the usual temper of the good-natured little Italian. Sweet and happy as was his natural disposition, he had no idea of being ruled in any such fashion as this; and in another moment he had twisted himself out of Marie's grasp, and stood facing her with eyes which flashed as angrily as her own.

'Stop, Marie,' he said, warding her off as she again attempted to seize him. 'You must not do so. I am not wretch. I love Cousime; I love she very dear. But, Marie, what can me do?' and he looked up appealingly into her face. 'De man, de dear man dat gave his life for me,—Meester Tootle say he be so sorry if me tell lies. Me cannot tell lies some more, Marie. No; me will not,' he added, with an abrupt change from his pleading tone to one of firm decision.

'Tell me what you mean,' said Marie, in a more quiet tone, but with an actual white heat of passion in her face. 'Do you mean to stand there and say that you are going to tell Mr. Tuttle or Mr. Phillips, or any of 'em, that baby ain't ours?'

'Dey nevare ask me; dey nevare sink 'bout she, Marie. When dey ask me—O Marie! What me do?'

'Well, what will you do?' she asked, in a hard, dry voice, perfectly unmoved by his evident distress.

He stood looking at her for a moment in silence, then he said, slowly, 'Me sink he will not ask me; but if he will, Marie, me cannot tell lies. Me say so to Meester

Tootle yesserday. Me say, "Me nevare tell lies some more."

'Gossip Pantell, listen to me,' said Marie, in a voice almost choked with fury. 'If you tell'—

A low moan from the bed stopped the angry threat on her lip, and made them both turn quickly toward Joe. He was gasping painfully for breath, and, forgetting her wrath in her anxiety for him, Marie sent Giuseppe down to call Mrs. Farley, and, lifting her brother's head to her shoulder, sat holding him in her arms, vainly endeavouring to give him some relief.

## VII.

### A DISAGREEABLE ADVENTURE.

'POOR lad, poor lad !' said Mrs. Farley, as she bent over the boy ; 'he's just clean gone with the wakeness. Gossip, go down and fetch me me big shawl till I wrap him up warm ; for he's as cold as ice. Martha, my girl, when it comes ten o'clock, you must just go up to the 'spensary and bring the doctor. He'll have to send Joe to the hospital, I'm thinkin'. He'll never come to no good here.'

'He shan't never,' said Marie, sharply ; 'I won't have no doctor. I'll take care of him myself. I'll never let him go to no hospital nor 'sylum.'

'Then he'll just die on your hands, and you'll have yourself to blame for it,' said Mrs. Farley, a little vexed by Marie's abrupt answer. 'He's just worked out, and starved out, and you haven't the means of doin' for him ; and it'll be a long day before he's able to do for himself, poor lad. Be reasonable, now, Martha. You've got yourself and Gossip and baby, and fifty cents the day to keep yez all ; and how can ye do for Joey too? He's in that state now that he wants nourishin' such as you can never get for him. Didn't me own husband die in the hospital too, as comfortable as could be, with nice soups and broths, and all things accordin' ?'

'You're all against me,' sobbed Marie, for Mrs. Farley's well-intentioned persuasions were in no wise encouraging ; and the girl's ignorant, but deep-rooted

aversion to public asylums and charities seemed to be only confirmed by her account of her husband.

But when, an hour later, Joe's agonized struggles for breath ended in a frightful convulsion, her terror drove her to call in the aid which she so much dreaded ; and leaving Mrs. Farley to watch beside the sick-bed, she hurried to the Dispensary for a physician.

She was so fortunate as to meet one of the doctors at the door, starting on his round of visits ; and, moved by her pitiful account of Joe's condition, he went at once to see him.

The doctor was a young man with a pleasant face and gentle manner ; and as he sat beside Joe, wiping the cold sweat from his face, or lifting his head to moisten his parched lips, quietly questioning Marie meanwhile with regard to his illness, the girl's heart warmed toward him ; and coming up close to his side she ventured to whisper,—

'There won't be no need to take him to no 'sylum nor hospital, will there ? You wouldn't take him away from me ?'

'I would not if I could help it, my girl ; but see here,' and he lifted Joe's hand and spread out the long, thin fingers on his own broad, strong palm. 'Do you think that these poor weak hands will ever grow strong and stout in this bad air, and only fed on what you can find to eat ? Your brother needs the very best of care, and if he does not have it, he will die. If we take him to the hospital, we may save his life.'

'But hospitals is so cruel hard,' said Marie. 'They never let nobody see nobody ; and me and Joe has always held on together, full or starved.'

'Oh yes ! you can see him on certain days,' said the

doctor, kindly. 'If I leave him here, you will soon have to put him where you will never see him again ; for, as I told you before, he cannot live unless he has the most nourishing food, and the most careful attention.'

'And you will make him well if I let him go?' asked Marie, beginning to relent.

'We will do our best for him, and I hope he may pull through ; but he is very low, poor fellow. What is his name?'

'Joe Giles.'

'Age?' asked the doctor, taking a note-book from his pocket and writing down the boy's name.

'Fifteen.'

'Poor fellow ! What a wreck at fifteen !' said the doctor, as he rose from his seat. 'I will send the ambulance for him at twelve o'clock. We will take him to a better sick room than this, and do our best to make a strong man of him yet. If he should come to himself, do not talk to him much about leaving you. Just tell him quietly that he is going away to be made well and strong. Will you?'

'Yes, sir,' said Marie, humbly.

She was surprised at herself when the doctor was gone, remembering how readily she had given her consent to this dreaded change ; but that awful convulsion had so terrified her that she dared not obstinately persist in keeping Joe with her, and, besides, the doctor's kindness had completely won her over. Perhaps if Joe had recovered consciousness, and had seemed to promise any amendment, she might have resisted his removal when the ambulance arrived ; but he only lay there, ghastly white and perfectly motionless except for an occasional twitching of his limbs, which kept her in such fear of a

second spasm that, when the men from the hospital knocked softly at the door and came in to carry him down, she said not a word in opposition. They lifted him very tenderly too, wrapping him carefully in a large blanket which they had brought with them ; and, seeing how gently they handled him, Marie began to hope that, after all, the hospital was no such fearful place, nor its guardians so ferocious and cruel, as she had always believed them to be.

'You'll be kind to him, won't you ?' she said, pleadingly, as she passed through the throng of ragged, dirty children who were rushing and crowding round the ambulance, looking up as she spoke into the face of one of the two men who had carried Joe down to the street.

'Surely, my lass, surely,' he said, turning his honest face toward her with a smile. 'Puir laddie,' he added, as he disposed Joe's nerveless limbs more comfortably on the mattress upon which he had been laid ; 'ye hae muckle rizzon to hae hert's care aboot 'im ; and yet,' with a pitying glance at the wretched company that struggled and crowded around him, 'I suldna think he wad gie us mony thanks for haudin' him in sic a life.'

Marie scarcely comprehended the broad Scotch dialect ; but it was not hard to understand the sympathizing glance of the deep-set eyes, nor the smile of the large, strong mouth, and her heart was greatly comforted.

'Good-bye, Joey,' she said, hopefully. 'I'll come and see you a Thursday ; the doctor said I might.'

Joe made no answer, for even his somewhat perilous journey down the broken stairs had not roused him from his stupor.

'Dinna grieve, there's a gude lass,' said her friend ; 'we'll hae 'im braw and strang again, please God ;' and

the ambulance was driven slowly and carefully away, a troop of wondering children, bare-footed, bare-headed, tattered, and forlorn, following for a little while, and then turning back to the wretched life out of which those slowly moving horses were bearing the unconscious boy.

Giuseppe had gone down to the office at the usual time with a heavier weight on his heart than it had known at any time since the day when Marie found him lying in the street, and carried him home to her garret in her strong arms. Joe was very ill ; Marie was very angry with him ; he was himself in great perplexity and doubt about little Cousime.

And yet, in spite of all this trouble and distress which weighed upon him, and brought a grave and serious look on his usually beaming face, the boy was not very unhappy. Deep down in his heart there lay a great, new joy, which threw its glad light over all his anxieties ; and, although it could not lift them away, so lightened and eased them, that, while he was no longer the merry, careless child he had been only a day or two ago, he was by no means wretched and miserable. That sweet story he had heard yesterday was ringing its beautiful chime in his heart still, and nothing could silence its music.

Perhaps we, to whom the story of the Cross has been a household word since first we learned to set the music of our mother's voice to words, can scarcely comprehend how amazing and how unutterably precious it must be to any one who hears it for the first time, when the mind is old enough to understand it, and the heart yet tender and innocent enough to receive it in unquestioning faith.

So the story had come to Giuseppe, and his affectionate heart had gone out in fullest trust and love to this faithful Friend, who had lived so weary a life and died so



cruel a death to save him from sin and from its punishment.

With just the same spirit of love and self-forgetfulness which had often led him to pretend that his hunger was satisfied, in order that Marie or Joe might have the last crust at their scanty supper, so, now that he had heard of the love of this dear Friend who had done so much for him, he was ready to brave everything to show his love and gratitude. There had been no sharp struggle in his soul such as many of us pass through before we give ourselves up as willing, loving servants to our Lord. He had been told the wondrous story by one whose word he trusted, and his loyal young heart had bowed at once in homage to its King, and in hearty, happy love to the Elder Brother who had done and suffered in his stead.

As he made his way quickly toward Mr. Phillips' office, his path lying through some of the meaner streets of the city, he came suddenly upon a man, who, with a large sack on his shoulder, was bending over a refuse-box which stood upon the edge of the side-walk. His back was turned toward Giuseppe; but the moment that the boy's eyes fell on the short, thick-set figure, with the bushy black hair cropping out from beneath the old grey hat which covered the man's head, he stood motionless as if he had been turned to stone, staring at him with wide-open, startled eyes.

This was what he had been expecting and dreading for the last year—he had met Martino Casola! What should he do? For a moment his knees actually smote together in his utter terror, and his colourless face was the very picture of despair. The next instant he thought of flight; but it was too late. Martino Casola turned,

and, seeing him standing there with the old look of abject fear on his face, recognised him at once, changed as he was from the ragged little urchin he had persecuted and ill used for nearly a year.

With an oath, he sprang toward him, and seized him by the shoulder.

‘Now, I have you, ungrateful wretch!’ he cried. ‘You shall never escape me again.’

For an instant Giuseppe stood powerless and unresisting. He was twelve years old, and strong and active for his years; and yet the cruel power and cunning of this man had so impressed him, and so fixed itself as a lasting terror on his mind, that at first he did not even think of opposing him. Casola saw his advantage at a glance, and, tightening his grip upon his shoulder, hurried him into a less-frequented street, scarcely knowing himself what he intended to do with him when he had secured him.

But Giuseppe was no longer the unhappy little slave he had been a year ago. Marie’s strong independence of character had done no little toward strengthening his weaker disposition; even the short time spent with Mr. Phillips, the knowledge that he was earning his own living, and the fact of his being decently dressed and cared for, had done something toward making a man of him; and, more than all, his new, firm trust in an ever-present, wise, and faithful Friend came to his help now in the time of his need. A sudden courage, strong and manful, sprang up in his heart, and drove his fright to the winds. With a quick, unexpected movement, he wrenched himself from Casola’s grasp, and, instead of running from him in fear, stood facing him on the street, with his bright, brave eyes fixed on the man’s face

fearlessly, but all on the alert to ward off another attack.

'How dare you touch me?' he said—using, as Martino had done, their own language—throwing back his head with a gesture of defiance, as Casola, in his surprise, stood and returned his gaze in silence. 'I know who you are. You are Martino Casola who used to beat and starve me because I was little and weak and friendless. But I am older and wiser and braver now, and I have strong, good friends.'

'Who are they, I should like to know?' asked Casola, thinking that it might be safer perhaps for him to be less violent with this well-dressed, sturdy young fellow than at the first glance had seemed necessary.

'They are Marie and Joe and Signor Pheelleeps, and—yes, there is another, who, I believe, has saved me from you to-day—my dear Lord Christ.'

With another oath, the man stepped back a little, utterly taken by surprise. But the next instant he recovered himself.

'I know nothing about your Joes and Phillips, and so forth,' he said with a sneer; 'and, as to the other, you'll find that He won't free you from me yet a while. You are mine. Your father gave you to me. Come, let us have no nonsense. You have learned before now that I have ready means to enforce obedience. My hand is no less heavy than it was a year ago, young man. Come.'

He had seized him again in spite of the boy's vigilance, and, drawing his arm through his own, held him in a tight grip; while to any passer-by the two would have seemed to be only walking arm-in-arm.

'See here,' said Casola, as he hurried him along the lonely street; 'if you speak, I will stab you to the heart

with this. What will your Lord Christ do for you then?

Giuseppe glanced at the shining blade, which, concealed in Martino's hand and sleeve, lay close at his own side. A few moments before, the sight would have sealed his lips in terrified silence. Now he turned his pale but calm face toward Casola, and answered quietly,

'He loves me, and He is strong and wise. I am not afraid.'

What Casola intended to do with his victim, he did not yet know; but this much he intended, to bring him safely and secretly to the miserable cellar where he lived, and to keep him a prisoner there until he should study out a plan to make money out of him in some way. The days for sending him out on the streets to earn pennies by playing on the violin were manifestly passed, but the boy evidently had friends who might willingly pay something for news of him. As for this Christ to whom he looked for help, Martino laughed at the very thought; but he had not yet learned that, although our dim eyes cannot see His dear face, nor our dull senses feel the touch of His hand, still He walks close beside those that love Him, and is never so near as when they are in danger. Casola's sharp eyes were scanning the street, lest a policeman might cross his path. Giuseppe was on the watch also for a blue uniform, or an honest face which he might trust; but neither Casola nor Giuseppe imagined that at that moment one of the boy's best earthly friends was coming quickly to meet them, quite unconscious that the Master was intending to use His strong arm and His wise head for the rescue from sore trouble of one of His little ones.

'Turn this corner,' said Martino, roughly, as he dragged Giuseppe hastily into a narrow, filthy street.

The boy's heart sank within him. Who could help him here? He dared not cry out, unless there was some one close at hand, for the ugly point of Casola's dirk was plainly visible still, and he knew that he had used it before now, and would not scruple to use it again.

They turned the corner.

'Why, Giuseppe, my boy, good morning!' said a loud, cheery voice. 'What are you doing here?'

'Meester Pheelleeps! Mine friend, mine friend!' cried the boy. "'Tis Martino! Martino Casola!' and, in a moment, he had torn himself from Casola's grasp, and was clinging with both hands to Mr. Phillips' arm, pouring out in his own tongue the story of his capture, quite forgetting that his present hearer could not understand him.

## VIII.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

MR. PHILLIPS was just the man to meet an emergency of this kind. Ready and quick in resource, he was also very calm and collected, and seldom lost his self-possession or his temper. One hasty glance told him that Casola was a coward as well as a villain, and although that searching look had shown him that he was armed, it had also shown him that in physical strength he was himself far more than a match for the Italian. With a quick movement he put Giuseppe aside, and confronted Casola, placing himself so directly in his path that the man could by no means escape him.

'May I ask by what right you are interfering with this boy?' he asked, in a very peremptory manner. 'He is in my service, and it is high time that he was attending to his duties. Where are you were taking him, so evidently against his will?'

Martino shook his head helplessly, pretending not to understand; but Mr. Phillips was not so easily deceived.

'You need not answer me, if you do not choose to do so,' he said, with a quiet smile, which told the man that he perfectly understood his subterfuge; 'but you must listen to me, nevertheless. I know this boy's story. His father died suddenly on shipboard, leaving him friendless and unprotected. You took charge of him, and of his small possessions. He fled from your cruelty, starved and abused; and I found him, and have cared

for him. More than that, before I lose sight of him to-day, I shall have him bound to me, by his own consent, so that I shall hereafter have a legal right to protect him, and I shall use that right most rigorously. If any harm befall him, I shall know whom to seek for. I never forget a face, and shall know you anywhere, and under any disguise. I shall never forget what I have seen this morning, and my testimony as to that dirk hidden in your sleeve will not tell well for you, if I have you up in a court of justice. The start you gave just now, Martino Casola, shows no unreasonable fear; for I give you my word that, if you ever again venture to lay your hand upon Giuseppe Antronelli, or even speak to him against his will, I will have this matter searched to the very bottom. Now you may go your way and we will go ours, and it will be better for you if we never meet again.'

Drawing Giuseppe's arm through his own, Mr. Phillips turned away, leaving Martino standing there, affecting not to understand his meaning,—an affectation which was belied by the flash of his dark eyes and the paleness of his face.

He had been taken completely by surprise. As he had hurried Giuseppe through the street, he had been engaged in coining a false story that the boy was his nephew, left to him by the will of his dying father; that he had run away from a good home to spend his life in bad company, and that he wished to reclaim him. But this man had waited for no story from him, but, in place of that, had told him a little tale which was by no means pleasant or reassuring.

Casola's memory went back to a little box of gold coin which had been among the 'small possessions' to

which Mr. Phillips had alluded, and which he had appropriated to his own use. Did he know of the existence of that box? Some of his fellow-passengers had known of it, and perhaps he had been told the truth. Giuseppe must, doubtless, remember the name of the vessel, and even, perhaps, the date of sailing and the names of some of their company. If so, this man who seemed to have taken up his case with so much interest, could probably trace some of those who could bring strong suspicion, at least, upon him. And he would do it; there was no peradventure as to that. Casola shook his head as he stood looking after the fast-retreating forms of Guiseppe and his friend. His life since he had been in America had not been such an one as he would care to have examined with a very critical eye; and Mr. Phillips' eyes had a wonderfully keen and searching look. Casola did not care to have the past two years laid open to their gaze. No; it would not do. With an angry stamp of his foot upon the pavement, and a fierce, muttered curse upon the boy, he turned off up a narrow alley, with an added shadow upon his dark face.

But Giuseppe was no longer in any danger from Martino Casola. The latter had arrived at the same conclusion to which Mr. Phillips had come shortly before—namely, that it was best that their two paths should diverge as much as possible.

‘Well, Giuseppe, this is quite an adventure,’ said Mr. Phillips, as they walked away, the boy having re-told the circumstances of his capture, but this time in language that Mr. Phillips could understand. ‘And how do you suppose that I happened to be in that den at this time in the morning?’



'De Lord Christ send you, I sink. I ask Him send somebodies.'

'What! Who did you say?' and Mr. Phillips looked down in amazement into Giuseppe's uplifted face.

'De Lord Christ, Meester Pheelleeps. Oh, yes! he added eagerly, as he saw a curious look pass over his friend's face. 'Meester Tootle, he tell me He will. He tell me "Giuseppe, tell always your trouble to de Lord Christ, and He help you quick." So when Martino hold me, I be very 'fraid and say, "O poor Giuseppe! dis is great troubles for you." Den I sink what Meester Tootle tell me, and I ask de dear Lord quick, times and times, overs and overs. Den when Casola pull me round dat corner, I sink, "Oh! dere will come none to help me here; what I do?" And see! Dere is mine good Meester Pheelleeps! De Lord send him for me. Is it not so?'

'Humph!' said Mr. Phillips, grimly.

They walked on a little way in silence, then the gentleman said more pleasantly,—

'You seem to have learned your lesson very rapidly. Did Mr. Tuttle tell you all this yesterday?'

'Yes, he tell me; I nevare know before. Nobody ever tell me what good friend dere is up dere for me. It is so beautiful I cannot sink it is for me, dis dear good friend. But Meester Tootle say, yes, it is for me, and for he, and for all de people. His moder tell he so, when he leetle boy. Do not you moder tell you some-sing 'bout He when you leetle boy, Meester Pheelleeps?' and he looked up anxiously into his employer's face, for his strange look and manner had disturbed him greatly.

For all answer, Mr. Phillips drew his arm hastily away from him, walked rapidly on for a few moments, and

then turned abruptly back into an office which they had just passed.

'Come in,' he said, glancing toward Giuseppe. 'I want to see this gentleman, and you must not go to the office without me.'

The gentleman was out, and they waited for him, Mr. Phillips seating himself as far from Giuseppe as possible, lest he should speak to him again. But in the silent office, as in the noisy street, that simple question rang in his ears: 'Do not you moder tell you somesing 'bout He when you leetle boy?'

He took up the morning paper to distract his thoughts, but all down its many columns the same words ran and danced: 'Do not you moder tell you somesing 'bout He when you leetle boy?' and with an impatient exclamation he threw the paper by, and sharply bid Giuseppe follow him again, for he would not wait the coming of his friend.

As they left the door, however, Mr. Gray, the gentleman whom he desired to see, met them, and they all returned to the office. The object of Mr. Phillips' visit was to consult Mr. Gray as to the surest means for placing Giuseppe entirely beyond the reach of Martino Casola; and, after some deliberation, it was concluded to bind him by regular indenture to Mr. Phillips, as his legal guardian. The necessary papers were made out, carefully explained to Giuseppe, signed and sealed; and, before the day was over, the whole matter was concluded, and Mr. Phillips had assumed the control of Giuseppe's life until he should come of age.

By the time they had returned to Mr. Phillips' office, the gentleman had quite regained his composure; and, as for Giuseppe, his delight was unbounded. Every

'Yes, Meester Pheelleeps, I try,' said Giuseppe, awed by his employer's unwonted earnestness.

As he walked homeward, the light did come back into his happy face. The stars shone brightly overhead, the air was keen, but bracing and pleasant; and the more he thought of the adventure of the morning, the more sure he felt that all that Mr. Tuttle had told him was true, strange as it seemed.

'Tis all just so as he say,' he said again and again, nodding his curly head as he walked on. 'I must tell Marie; she be so glad. I wonner if she be so mad wiz me when I go home.'

But Marie's mood had changed very thoroughly long before he reached home. The doctor and her kind-hearted Scotch friend had both done something toward softening her; and her grief, and longing for sympathy, had done more still. The hours which had passed slowly by since Joe was carried away, without giving her one farewell word or look, had been very long and dreary, and there is nothing like a common sorrow to melt away our vexation or anger with a friend.

Giuseppe's astonishment, when he found that Joe had been taken to the hospital, and with Marie's consent, at first drove his own story quite out of his mind; but he took a far more encouraging view of the situation than Marie had done, and his hopefulness, and, indeed, the very sight of his bright face, quite cheered and comforted her.

'Well, we'll have a bite to eat, anyway,' she said at last, rising from the corner in which she had been sitting for the last two or three hours. 'Tain't no use a frettin'.'

'O Marie! Who you sink I see dis day?' asked

Giuseppe, his thoughts going back at once to the grand event of the day, the moment the newer interest had lost its first force.

‘I don’t know. Why, Gossip! Not that old Martin?’ for it had flashed upon her at once, that only he could call up such a look on his face.

‘Yes. Martino Casola! But Meester Pheelleeps, he come and save me.’

And then, in the most rapid and vehement manner, he related the whole story of his capture and his rescue. Marie fairly held her breath in her intense interest, and she clasped him to her with all her old fondness, when, at the conclusion of his recital, he flung himself upon her lap, saying,

‘But I am come home, safe home, and Meester Pheelleeps say Casola nevare touch me some more, ’cause me—I—be Meester Pheelleeps’ boy from dis day; and if Casola touch me, he go to prison, quick.’

‘But, Gossip! Just suppose Mr. Phillips hadn’t come along, what would you have done? You wouldn’t never have gone into any of those places with that man?’

‘No; I sink about dat, and I say to me, “Giuseppe, look for policeman, or for some ’noder nice man what look like he would help you. If you cannot get away from Casola, den you stay wiz him; but don’t go in some place wiz him. If you don’t meet somebodies, go wiz him softly, ’cause if you run, he run faster of you; but if he try to pull you in some place, den fight,—fight so hard as you can; if he kill you, ’tis better as to go wiz him.”’

‘But wasn’t you awful afraid, Gossip?’

‘Yes,’ said Giuseppe, candidly. ‘Very much ’fraid. Martino is very strong man, Marie, and he so bad man

as can grow, I sink. But den I sink wiz myself, " 'Tis better to be killed as to live wiz Casola 'noder time." And Meester Tootle say yesserday to me, Marie, dat if we be killed, we will go up dere to live wiz de Lord Christ. 'Tis not so bad, Marie.'

'Oh ! but, Gossip,' said the girl, with a shudder, ' it's awful to die.'

'Well, 'tis nice here in dis place,' said Giuseppe, contentedly. 'I like to stay here ; 'tis very good. Meester Tootle say it is better dere as here ; but den I don't like Martino to make me dead ; dat will be very bad.'

'He'd better look out,' said Marie, fiercely, 'how he touches you again. I wonder Mr. Phillips let you come home alone. I'll go to the office with you myself to-morrow and go for you at night.'

'Meester Pheelleeps say Martino nevare will do so no more,' said Giuseppe, confidently. 'I don't sink he will, 'cause he look very 'fraid when Meester Pheelleeps talk hard wiz him. He look very mad, but very 'fraid too. He don't touch me 'noder time.'

'Gossip,' said Marie, as they were eating their supper ; 'you didn't have no words with Mr. Phillips as to baby, did you ?'

'No,' said Giuseppe, quietly ; 'he don't ask me nossin', Marie.'

And the girl, having set her anxious mind at rest, said nothing more, for she felt very tenderly toward him, just escaped, as it seemed to her, from the very jaws of destruction.

## IX.

### IN HOSPITAL.

It was a curious sight on which Joe opened his eyes on the evening of the second day after he had been carried from his home. Waking, as he thought, out of a long sleep, he lifted his heavy eyelids and looked languidly about him. Why, what had Marty been doing with the old room? Had Gossip's fifty cents a day worked such a change as this? 'Perhaps so,' thought poor, stupid Joe, 'Marty is so smart.' And he looked about him, more and more surprised, as his dulled senses roused themselves little by little.

The ceiling, white and without a single hole or crack in it, rose high above his head, the walls, as spotless and as unbroken, stretched away—oh, so far! and down their whole length were placed long, narrow beds,—some occupied, some smooth and empty, looking delightfully comfortable and soft. This could not possibly be their garret room. Perhaps it was a hotel. He knew that there were some large handsome rooms in hotels; perhaps this was one of them. Could it be that he was himself lying in one of those restful-looking beds? He turned his head to see; how heavily and slowly it moved! Yes; there was just such a soft white pillow beneath his cheek, and a clean white spread covered him. What a smart girl Marty was, to be sure!

He wondered if she were sitting near, and tried to turn his head again to see; but it was too hard work, and with a weary sigh he gave up the effort. As the sigh escaped him, there was a little rustling movement

at his side, and the next moment a motherly-looking face bent over him.

'Well, sonny, have you waked up?' asked a low voice.

'Ye-es,' said Joe, slowly. And to his surprise he found that his voice made scarcely any sound.

'You're very weak, sonny,' said the woman, seeing the wondering look in his face. 'You've been very ill; but, please God, you'll pick up now.'

'Where's Martha and Gossip?' whispered Joe.

'They are home, dear.'

'You bean't Miss Farley, be you?' asked the boy, more and more bewildered.

'No; I am your nurse. You are in the hospital. They brought you here very ill, and I am taking care of you. We'll try to have you strong and well yet, the doctor and me.'

He lay and looked at her for a moment, and then the sound of a tread on the floor made him turn his eyes from her face to that of a gentleman who had entered a door which opened near his bed.

The new-comer walked slowly through the room, pausing at every occupied bed to speak a few words with the man who lay there, then passing on with a nod and smile to the next. For a few minutes Joe watched him on his way; but, long before the doctor reached his bed, those heavy lids of his had fallen again.

'He is better, sir, I think,' said the nurse, as the doctor bent over the boy. 'He has been talking a little, quite sensible, but very weak.'

Joe felt a strong, warm hand laid upon his, but he was too listless even to look up.

'Yes,' said the doctor gravely, 'that may be; but it will be only for the moment. He is quite unconscious

again. The flame may flicker and flash a little before it dies out entirely ; but there is no oil in the lamp. Poor fellow, he will never rally ;' and the doctor passed on.

An hour or two later, as Mrs. Wilcox, the nurse, sat sewing by a shaded lamp near Joe's bed, she heard a whispered,—

'I say, nuss.'

'I'm here,' she said, rising and going to him. 'Wait a little before you try to speak. Drink this first ; it will make you stronger.'

She lifted his head upon her arm, and put a glass to his lips. 'There now ; we'll have a little more pretty soon ; you couldn't take much, could you, poor boy ?'

'What did he mean ?' said Joe, weakly.

'Who, dear ?'

'That man, the doctor, I suppose. He that was here just now, and said I'd never rally. What is it ?—rally ?'

'Oh, he meant you'd be sick a while yet,' said the nurse, trying to speak carelessly.

'He meant more than that, I'm thinkin',' said Joe. 'I believe he meant I wouldn't never be well ; and I believe he's in the right of it too. 'Tain't in me to get well, I don't think.'

The words had fallen slowly, one by one, from his lips, and great drops stood out on his pale face with the effort to speak.

'Oh, you must keep up a brave heart,' said the nurse, as she wiped his damp forehead. 'Don't talk any more now, but keep all your strength to get well on. There, take a sup more of this, and then I'll sit here close beside you with my work, and you can have a nice sleep.'

As she laid him down again, after giving him another



drink, he looked up so entreatingly into her face that she asked him gently,—

‘Do you want something, sonny?’

‘I want that man,’ he whispered.

‘The Doctor?’

‘No; the man what did for Gossip.’

‘I don’t know who you mean. What is his name?’

‘I disremember. But he’s good and kind; I want him. Where’s Gossip? He’d tell me about him.’

‘Is Gossip your brother?’

‘Yes, or just like it. Martha fetched him in out of the street. I want him, nuss.’

‘Well, dear, you’ll see him to-morrow, maybe. Archibald Greig, that’s the man that brought you up here, told me to tell you when you wakened that your sister said she’d come to see you to-morrow. Now, be quiet, like a good lad, and maybe they’ll both be here in the morning, and even the gentleman too. Who knows?’

‘I wish he’d come to-night,’ whispered Joe. ‘Nuss,’ and the dim eyes were so wistful that the woman could scarcely meet them, ‘I’m a dyin’. I know it now. Nuss, it’s awful lonesome.’

‘I’ll stay close by you, lad,’ she said, tenderly, knowing that it was useless to try to deceive him.

‘Yes; you’re very good. But you can’t do nothin’, can you? I want that man, the man what did for Gossip. O nuss! it do be awful lonesome to die.’

‘Well, now, lad, I think you won’t die to-night at all. You’re very ill; but it isn’t so bad as that. Do lie quiet and rest.’

She smoothed his pillows, bathed his face, and moistened his parched lips, and then she sat beside him, holding one of his cold hands in her own kind grasp.

But Joe wanted something more than human tenderness to fill this woful void in his heart ; and, more than once, during the long hours of the night, the woman heard him whisper mournfully, ' It do be awful lonesome.'

Every time the dreary whisper sounded in her ears, she stroked the hand she held a little, or spoke some word to cheer and encourage him ; and toward morning the sad refrain ceased, and Joe lay quiet again, sunk in a heavy stupor.

' Perhaps he will pass away so,' thought the nurse, watching the feeble breath as it flickered and almost failed from time to time. ' I wonder who it is he wants to see so bad. I'd send and fetch him, if I only knew. I wonder if he's very far off.'

No ; He was not very far off. The Friend whom Joe so longed for is always near at hand, and never so near as when a longing heart is in sore peril and distress.

All through the morning Mrs. Wilcox watched for the coming of Joe's sister almost as anxiously as if she herself had needed her comfort and aid. She was a loving-hearted woman, and Joe's forlorn and desolate condition, and the knowledge that there was no possible hope of saving him from the death that was stealing slowly but surely upon him, had touched her very deeply.

' If they don't come, Mrs. Miller—the brother and sister, I mean,' she said to a woman who, risen from a sick-bed in another ward, had crept in to look at the boy for whom Mrs. Wilcox's story, told her that morning, had roused her sympathies also—' I do really hope he won't waken again. It was too pitiful last night to hear him moaning for somebody.'

' They may come yet,' said Mrs. Miller ; ' it is only two o'clock. There is Martin come to call you now.'

'Here is a boy wants to see a man named Joseph Giles,' said Martin, the door-boy, as Mrs. Wilcox went to meet him at the entrance to the ward. 'Dr. Marsh says he's in your room, number sixteen.'

'Yes; he is here. Where is the boy?'

Giuseppe came forward as she spoke, his eyes full of wonderment, and an undefined dread of something painful and distressing. He had been very shy about coming up alone to this strange place; and now that he was here, he was somewhat startled and ill-at-ease among all these new surroundings, so unlike anything he had ever seen before. The great house, with its massive doors, its wide corridors, and handsome staircase; the many pale-faced, feeble-looking men and women he had seen through the open doors of the rooms which he had passed; the whole strange atmosphere of the place — confused and troubled him; but he turned toward the voice which had spoken, and all his doubts and uncertainties vanished on the instant.

'You want to see Joe Giles?' asked Mrs. Wilcox, kindly, holding out her hand to him as she spoke. 'Are you the boy whom he calls Gossip?'

'Yes; I am Giuseppe Antronelli.'

'Then you are not his brother?'

'No; but dey take care for me, Marie and Joe, like me is his broder. Where is Joe?'

'He is here. Come over and see him; but I do not think he will know you. He is very ill indeed.'

Giuseppe followed her to the bed. Joe lay there as he had lain all through the day, white and still, the only sign of life he gave being an occasional flutter of his pallid lips.

'He is dead?' asked Giuseppe, in an awe-stricken whisper.

'No; he is not dead. Speak to him very gently. Perhaps he will know your voice.'

'Joe, mine dear, good Joe,' said the boy, softly. 'Joe, open you eyes to look at Giuseppe; 'tis Giuseppe who loves you much.'

The closed eyelids were raised very slowly, and the dim eyes fixed themselves upon Giuseppe's face.

'The—the man—Gossip!' faltered the feeble voice. 'I—want—him.'

'Meester Pheelleeps, Joe?' asked the boy, failing at at first to understand his meaning.

'No; the man—what did—such great things—for you. The teacher told'—

'Oh! 'tis de Lord Christ,' said Giuseppe, reverently, as the faltering words failed. You want He, Joe? Well, so He want you, Meester Tootle say. Every one want de oder; Jesus Christ and Joe.'

'What must I do, Gossip?'

'Nossin',' said Giuseppe, confidently. 'He do every sing, so Meester Tootle say. He do every sing; den He say, "Now come, love me when I love you so dear." Dat is all, Joe. Love Him; dat is all.'

'But, Gossip, I'm—a dyin'. It's lonesome dyin'.'

The voice was so utterly faint and feeble, the eyes so longingly sad and wistful, that Giuseppe, totally unused to any such scene, could scarcely keep back the swelling pain and grief which oppressed him. But something told him that he was Joe's only earthly hope, and with a strong effort he controlled himself.

'Joe,' he said, steadily, 'tis only last night me see Meester Tootle, and he talk to me 'bout dat. He say, "Giuseppe, 'tis not so hard to die. 'Tis only to go to

'Poor dear, she's lost her little baby, and she's most crazed about it,' said the nurse.

'Lost it?' repeated the boy.

'Yes,' whispered Mrs. Wilcox. 'She was very ill indeed, and a woman who had her baby to board got tired of doin' for it, having a large family of her own to care for, and her man sick besides; and she put it out on the street, it seems, one day when she was hard pressed, thinking the police would find it. Mrs. Miller hadn't paid her anything for a long while, and she had lost sight of her, and thought, not knowing that she was sick in hospital, that the baby would be left on her hands; so she just put it out, thinking as I said, that the police would take care of it, and carry it to the Foundling. But there isn't no such child in the Foundling, and the police thereabouts never saw the little thing, nor never heard anything of it. Mrs. Miller thought at first, poor thing, that maybe the woman had done something with the baby, but she don't think so now, for she feels nigh as bad about it as the mother does. It seems her heart misgave her just after she'd done it, and she ran out to fetch it back; but it was gone. She'd wrapped it in an old shawl, after dressing it neat and clean, and laid it in an arey-way of a decent house, covered over with a bit of oil-cloth. She says the little thing laughed up in her face as she tucked it in good and warm, and she could hear the crows of it as she turned away and left it; and them crows rang in her ears till she ran out again, not a quarter of an hour after, to fetch it home. It was only just around the corner; but the child was gone, and never a word have we heard tell of it yet. But, child, I'm talking too much for you, after all you've gone through. You're as white as a sheet.'

'When is all dis?' asked Giuseppe, lifting up a face which was indeed white to the very lips.

'When did she lose the child you mean?' questioned the nurse. 'It was a week ago, last Monday; nigh upon two weeks since now. But we won't talk any more. You look real bad.'

'I must go home to Marie,' said Giuseppe, quietly. 'What will she do, mine dear Marie?'

'Well, poor girl, it will be hard for her, and she not having a chance to bid him good-bye. Good-bye, sonny,' and she kissed Giuseppe's brown cheek.

As he passed Mrs. Miller on his way from the room, she put out her hand and drew him toward her.

'Maybe you could help me,' she said, entreatingly. 'Greig said you lived in Baxter Street; and my baby,—O me!—she laid my baby just round in Crosby Street. Maybe you might hear something of her if you tried. You boys always seem to find out everything. Will you try—will you?' and the poor mother drew him close to her, and looked beseechingly into his downcast face.

'Yes; me try,' he said, slowly. 'Me try all me can.'

'And you will come and let me know if you hear the least whisper of a baby being found anywhere?'

'Me come just so quick as me can,' said Giuseppe, still without looking at her.

And then he went away, walking slowly down the long staircase, and through the halls, saying mournfully to himself, 'Mine poor Marie! Joe and leetle Cousime! Two in one day! What she do, mine poor Marie?'

No easy task lay before the boy on his return home. It would have been sad enough to have had to tell

Marie only that Joe, whom she so fully expected to welcome home again well and strong, had been lifted to that Home where he should never hunger nor suffer any more; but to add to this the story that he had undoubtedly seen the mother of the little baby around whom Marie had permitted her love to twine itself so closely, and whom she had appropriated as her very own, seemed almost too hard.

The question as to what it was right to do in the matter did not trouble him, for it never occurred to him that there was any escape from the imperative duty of returning the child at once to its distracted mother, nor did he imagine for an instant that Marie would refuse to do so. The conviction that little Cousine must be the lost child of Mrs. Miller had come upon him like a thunderbolt; and, following so closely upon his great grief and loss, had, for the moment, almost stunned him, and his only thought had been to go home to Marie and tell her all, before he whispered a single word even to the poor mother.

It was nearly dark when he entered the little garret-room. Marie was sitting on the floor, close by the small fire which burned on the hearth, crooning softly to the baby who lay on her lap, studying her own small hands with an appearance of the greatest interest. Marie certainly had not the gift of song, and her singing was by no means sweet and musical, but the low drone was a very happy sound, nevertheless, and she and her little charge made a picture of the most thorough enjoyment and content.

‘Well, Gossip,’ she said, cheerily, as the boy entered the room; ‘what news of Joe? Is he nice and comfortable? Why, Gossip! Gossip!’

For he had thrown himself down on the floor beside her, and burst into an agony of crying.

'Tell me! tell me!' she exclaimed, shaking him in her earnestness. 'Is he very bad indeed? O Gossip!' and her voice fell to a whisper, 'he isn't dead?'

For answer Giuseppe clasped his arms around her neck, and cried more bitterly than before. She did not need any further reply. For a few moments they held each other very closely, Marie sobbing as if her heart would break; but, after a while, she raised her head, and dashing the tears from her face, said,—

'Tell me all about it, Gossip. Do you think they was good to him up there? Did he tell you anything, or was he dead before you got there?'

'No; he talk to me good while,' said Giuseppe, choking back his tears. 'Dere was nice womans dere,—two nice womans,—kind and sweet. Dey take care for Joe.'

'Oh, dear! Oh, dear!' moaned Marie, 'and me not there to speak to him! Dyin' 'most alone, poor Joey! Was he awful afraid, Gossip?'

'No,' said Giuseppe; 'no, Marie; he don't be 'fraid. I don't know if he see de Lord Christ, but he say to me, "I b'lieve He is close by!" And he look so glad! Oh, so glad he do look, Marie!'

The girl sat silent for a while. Then she asked him quietly,

'Who was the women, Gossip? Nusses?'

'One was de nuss,' said Giuseppe. 'De oder'—

He paused, and looked at her with such a curious expression on his face, that Marie's eager interest was roused immediately.

'Why, what's the matter?' she asked, hurriedly. 'Is there something more to tell? Gossip, you're hiding



something from me, I know! Was the other woman bad to Joe? What makes you look so pitiful at me?'

He had not intended to tell her anything more that night. He had made up his mind during his walk home to wait, at least, until the morning; but his tell-tale face had betrayed him. He could not hide anything from Marie's quick eyes.

'Tell me, quick, Gossip!' she repeated, as he hesitated. 'I will know everything! I always said as hospitals was cruel hard, and mean, and if they've mis-used Joe up there'—

'No, Marie, no! Dey is good and kind to Joe. But, O Marie! I have big sorry for you. I have want to keep it for 'noder day, but I tell you now. Marie, dis woman,—dis oder woman,—she is de moder of leetle Cousime.'

With a smothered cry, Marie caught the child up from her lap, and held her close to her breast. The next moment she turned fiercely upon Giuseppe.

'That's a lie!' she exclaimed; and, with an angry thrust, she pushed him from her. 'How do you know who her mother is?'

Giuseppe looked at her for a moment in silence, too much grieved and hurt to speak. Then he said slowly,

'Tis no lie, Marie. She tell me de story. She be very sick, and some 'noder woman take care for de baby. De 'noder woman, she don't know where is de moder, and she be poer, and she put de baby in de street, and put she in some shawl, and put some cover on she; 'tis in Crosby Street, Marie. Den she leave de baby; and when she is home den she is so sorry after leetle while, and she go back to find de baby, and she is gone.'

'That don't say it's our baby,' said the girl, sharply.

'Me sink it is Cousime, Marie. 'Tis all like dat day you tell me you find she. O Marie, de moder, de poor moder, she cry so bad !'

'Did you tell her anything?' said Marie, a sudden thought striking her that perhaps it was already too late to deny what she feared was only the truth.

'No, me feel too sorry; me cannot tell her till me tell you. To-morrow we go, you and me, mine Marie, and we take Cousime, and we ask de moder is dis her baby.'

'We won't! I won't; and if you dare to breathe a word of this ridiculous story, I'll—I'll—O you thief! You robber! After all I've done for you, to try to steal away my baby! And Joe dead, and me with nothin' left but baby. I hate you, you mean little furriner! I hate you!' and Marie's furious tirade was choked by a passion of tears.

Giuseppe stood motionless, looking at her in wondering dismay. Once before, when he had told her that he had promised to be true and faithful to his word, and could therefore tell no more falsehoods, even with regard to Cousime, he had proved that Marie's temper was no easy thing to deal with; but even that experience had been nothing like this. She hated him. She had said it over and over again. She had nothing left to her but the baby, now that Joe was gone, she said; could she mean it? Was he nothing to her, after all?

The girl's passion spent itself somewhat in the burst of crying which had overpowered her, and when she raised her head and saw Giuseppe standing there, gazing at her with such a look of distress, she began to hope that she had conquered him already. She rose from the floor, and, with the baby still in her arms, began to

pace up and down the little room. For a long while she said nothing, but, by and by, stopping before the boy, who stood leaning against the wall as silent as she, she said, coldly,

'Gossip, why do you care for that new woman more than for me, who took you out of the street, and fed you, and warmed you, and loved you?'

Almost at the first word he had cried out in indignant protest against the cruel accusation. She did not heed him, but went on until she had finished. By that time his sense of her injustice and of his own innocence had come to his aid, and he drew himself up with a sort of gentle dignity, as he said, with a little quaver in his voice,

'Marie, dere is no womans I love, only you and Cousime. I love you very dear, both two, but mine Marie more better as Cousime. When you see dat woman, Marie, and she tell you she want her leetle baby so bad, you give she to de moder; you will, mine Marie. Me am not tief; me will not steal de baby, mine Marie will give she to de moder.'

'I don't believe she is that woman's baby at all,' said the girl, somewhat softened, in spite of herself, by Giuseppe's manner.

'Den we may keep she for us,' said Giuseppe, eagerly. 'We bring she to de woman; and if she say, "No, 'tis not mine baby," den she is Marie's baby once more. Come, Marie, come wiz me to Meester Tootle. Meester Pheelleeps, he give me letter for he, and he tell me to take it to he dis night after me see Joe. But me forget de letter when me come from Joe. We leave Cousime wiz Mees Fairley, and we go to Meester Tootle, you and me, and we tell him all dis, and he tell us what we do. Come, Marie!'

'No,' said Marie, as angrily as before. I won't do it. It's none of Mr. Tuttle's business. And, Gossip,' and she seized him by the shoulder, 'if you dare to tell Mr. Tuttle one word of this, I'll turn you out on the street again, as sure as I live. I tell you I'll never give baby up, never! If that woman is her mother, I've got the best right to her now. She might have starved to death there, or been frozen with the cold, if I hadn't saved her. She's mine, I tell you! I'll never give her up!'

'Marie, dis is very bad,' said Giuseppe, solemnly. 'Tis to steal; and Meester Tootle say de Lord Christ is so sorry if we steal. Marie, mine Marie'—

'Hush up! I'm not your Marie neither! Not if you go against me this way. It's not stealing. How dare you say that to me!'

'Yes, Marie, 'tis to steal. 'Tis very bad steal, too. To take de leetle baby from de moder is more bad steal as to take de loaf of bread from de cart.'

'Very well, then,' her anger and her fear together quite overcoming her, 'call it stealing. Go to your Mr. Tuttle, who has put all these grand new notions into your head, and tell him all you know. Tell him that me and Joe saved you from starving to death, and loved you dear; and that now, when Joe is dead, and I've got nobody to love but baby, you want to drag her away from me. Tell him I stole her, if you like; and then he can have me put in prison, and you can give baby to that woman. You'd like that, I suppose. Be off from here, now, this minute. I don't want to look at you;' and in her passion she pushed him violently out of the room, and closed and locked the door behind him.

Marie had kept her sharpest and surest arrow for the last attack. She knew Giuseppe well enough to feel

certain that she had only to doubt his gratitude, to question his love, and to make him believe that she thought that she had lost the first place in his heart, in order to ensure his silence, at least for the time. Angry as she was, she felt quite secure for the moment; and, when the sound of his footsteps had died away on the stairs, she sat quietly down to think over this new state of things, and to make up her mind what it was best to do in the case.

Meanwhile, Giuseppe was on his way up town to deliver his message to Mr. Tuttle. Mr. Phillips had told him to ride, and he sat in a corner of the car, thoughtfully fingering one of the five-cent pieces which the gentleman had given him to pay his fare, with such an absent and preoccupied look that the conductor, after glancing at him once or twice, and noticing that he was a foreigner, came into the car and asked him if he knew where he was going.

'Yes,' said Giuseppe, 'to Twenty Street.'

'All right,' said the man; 'I saw you were a stranger, and thought you looked as if you felt a little uncertain.'

'No; I be sure. 'Tis Twenty Street; I go there before;' and the boy looked up so intelligently that the conductor thought that he need not to have been at all anxious on his account.

Nevertheless, when they reached Twentieth Street, Giuseppe was in a brown study again, and so engrossed in it, that, if it had not been for the friendly conductor, he might have gone some distance out of his way.

'Twentieth Street!' he called, a little sharply, with a tap of the bell; and Giuseppe sprang up, quite astonished.

'I fank you,' he said, as he jumped from the platform, 'I did forget;' and he had forgotten again before he reached the door of Mr. Tuttle's house. For never in all his life had Giuseppe had so much to think of. Shocked by Joe's—to him—sudden death; startled by the discovery of little Cousime's mother, and astounded and grieved beyond all measure by Marie's conduct, both with regard to the child and toward himself, it was scarcely to be wondered at that he should feel as if he were almost powerless even to think, and still less able to act.

Was it really possible that Marie would be sent to prison for having stolen the baby? She had not stolen it. No, not yet. But then, what if it came to be found out that she was keeping it from its own mother? And, then, what if she were punished by his means?

And she had accused him of caring more for Mr. Tuttle, and even for this strange woman, than for her,—for her who had saved him from actual starvation and death. And she was so lonely, poor Marie! And here he was—he for whom she had done so much—trying to persuade her to give up almost the only comfort she had in her miserable life; even more than that, it seemed as if he were really plotting against her to take it away, for he felt in his heart that, persuasion failing, something else must be done; and he, whom she had loved and cared for in his utter destitution and distress, was the only one to do it. Her very kindness and charity to him would be the means of her loss and pain; for if she had not sheltered and fed him, he would not have been able to oppose her now.

It was a hard question to settle, and yet every generous impulse, every honourable feeling in the boy revolted

against this terrible cruelty toward the poor mother. He had to choose between his duty and his love ; but, while his duty stood up before him, unshadowed and clear as the sunlight, his great love cried out against it, and he felt powerless and helpless between the two.

## XI.

### GIUSEPPE'S VISIT.

As he stood waiting for the door to be opened, some one ran up the steps behind him, and turning, he faced Mr. Phillips.

'Why, Giuseppe !' exclaimed the gentleman. 'You do not mean to say that you have only just brought my note to Mr. Tuttle ? I had promised to come to see him at five o'clock, and the note was to tell him that I could not be here before seven. It is seven o'clock now. What have you been doing ?'

He spoke very severely, but the first sound of Giuseppe's voice disarmed his displeasure.

'I very sorry, Meester Pheelleeps. Joe be dead, and I forget, and go first to mine Marie.'

'Joe is dead ! No wonder you forgot the note,' said the gentleman, kindly. 'Well, it will not matter, I dare say. Come in, and see Mr. Tuttle,' he added, as the boy would have turned away. 'He will like to see you.'

He had been struck with the look of distress in his face, and wanted to do something to comfort him.

'Sit down here for a while,' he said, leading him into the hall. 'I will go up to his room and ask him if he feels well enough to see you.'

Leaving Giuseppe sitting in the hall, Mr. Phillips ran up the stairs, knowing himself always a more than welcome visitor in his friend's room ; and, before many



minutes had elapsed, he came out again and called to the boy to follow him.

Mr. Tuttle was lying in a reclining chair, his broken limb, which had been set in plaster, stretched out in a box, the sight of which had startled Giuseppe very considerably on the preceding evening. But to-night he looked very bright and well, and spoke to the boy in quite his usual tone and manner as he crossed the room toward his chair.

'So you are in sore trouble, Giuseppe,' he said, holding out his hand to him. 'I am very sorry for you ; but I am glad that poor Joe's pain and weakness are all over now. Did you tell him about the beautiful home which we were talking of last evening?'

'Yes ; I tell he, and he be very glad, poor Joe. He say he want to do somesing for de Lord, but I tell he Meester Tootle say dere is nossin', only love de Lord, and be sorry for all de bad sings. Den he look so glad ; and bimeby he say, "Giuseppe, He is close by." Den he shut de eyes, and only one time he open dem again, and say, "Oh, 'tis sunshiny morning!" And all his white face look so bright and sweet, like de sunshine was in here,' touching his breast. 'And so he shut de eyes once more ; and so he is asleep.'

'And when he awoke he found himself at home in heaven,' said Mr. Tuttle, gently.

'I wish I gone wiz him,' said Giuseppe, with a little break in his voice.

'Do you ?' said Mr. Tuttle, gravely. 'Why, that is a strange wish for a strong, healthy, happy boy like you. Did you love Joe so very dearly that you feel as if you could not stay here without him?'

'I love him very dear,—so dear as can be ; but—no

—I don't know if I want to go wiz him dess for dat. But I am in big troubles, Meester Tootle ; so big troubles as I don't know what to do.'

'What is the matter? You may tell all your difficulties to Mr. Phillips and me.'

'No ; I cannot tell nonebodies. 'Tis very bad, but I cannot tell.'

'Has Casola anything to do with it?'

'No ; 'tis me and—and—oh, me cannot tell ! What me do ?' and he looked up helplessly into Mr. Tuttle's face.

'Why, I cannot advise you, if you will not tell me what it is that distresses you,' replied the gentleman. 'Austin,' turning to Mr. Phillips, who had sat perfectly quiet during the conversation, 'do you know anything of this ?'

'Nothing at all. What is it all about, Giuseppe ? If you will not tell the whole story, can you give us some hint of your trouble ? It is quite impossible for us to help you unless you can give us some little information. We will do anything we can, if we only know how to go to work ; for you look troubled enough. Giuseppe,' a sudden suspicion crossing his mind, 'have you been doing something wrong ?'

'No, Meester Pheelleeps—yes—no—me don't know,' replied the perplexed and bewildered boy.

'Have you been stealing ?' asked the gentleman, very sternly.

'No,' said Giuseppe, holding up his head, and speaking now without the least indecision. 'I told you, Meester Pheelleeps, I will not steal no more.'

'Nor lying ?'

'No, Meester Pheelleeps,' as emphatically as before.

'Then what have you been doing for which you are sorry and ashamed?'

'Nossin', Meester Pheelleeps.'

Every trace of doubt and uncertainty had disappeared from his manner. He felt himself wrongfully accused, and his pride rose up in arms at once. Mr. Phillips looked at him searchingly, then he said slowly,

'Then, Giuseppe, you are tempted to do wrong, and you are afraid that you shall yield.'

With a start, almost of terror, the boy looked up into his face. Was he a magician, that he could read his very heart? No; he was only a keen-sighted man, who had made the reading of men's faces and ways the study of his life; and he read the poor little secret of the open-faced young Italian with very slight trouble.

'It would be much better for you to confide in us, or in either one of us, if you prefer to speak only to one,' said Mr. Phillips, without waiting for any clearer answer to his charge than that quick start. 'I am afraid that you are in danger of falling into serious difficulty. If I leave you here with Mr. Tuttle, can you not tell him what it is? He is your best friend.'

'He is good friend; but he is none better as mine dear Meester Pheelleeps,' exclaimed Giuseppe, springing from his seat, and seizing his hand. 'Dere is none friend better as Mr. Pheelleeps, 'cept mine Marie; she is mine first,—only'—he added, with a little fall in his voice, but a brighter look in his face,—'only Meester Tootle say de dear Lord is de first, and He give you all to me. But He know mine troubles. I tell He all dere is.'

'You told your difficulties, that you say you cannot tell to us, to our Lord, Giuseppe?' asked Mr. Tuttle, as Mr. Phillips made no reply.

'Yes, Meester Tootle, you tell me so.'

'Yes; I told you to do so,' said the gentleman. 'He will surely help you if you tell Him everything, and ask Him to lead you in the best and wisest way. But, Giuseppe, our Lord often guides us by the hand, or through the better knowledge of some earthly friend; and perhaps He sent you here to-night that we might help you.'

Giuseppe stood before him, still holding Mr. Phillips' hand tightly in his own, with a very thoughtful face. The gentlemen were both silent. They were greatly interested in this boy. Indeed, he had succeeded in arousing in both of them a feeling deeper than interest, a real affection; and something told them that this was a crisis in his life. Some problem, as deep for him perhaps as any which had ever come into their own lives, was engaging every power of his heart and mind; and that he was striving to decide it honestly and conscientiously, no one who looked into his face could doubt. They longed to help him,—the man who had devoted his life to the leading of wayward young feet into the ways of peace, and the man of the world who had simply been won by the boy's own power of attraction. Fortunately for himself, Giuseppe knew this. He loved and trusted both these men heartily and completely, and knew them for his willing and wise friends.

'Mine two good friends,' he said at length, after a long silence, speaking with a sort of quiet decision which was in complete contrast to the agitated manner which had led Mr. Phillips to fear that there was something seriously wrong with him, 'me—I—ask you somesings. If dere is somebodies you love very dear, and who is so good to you as nonebody else can be, and dat somebody

does somesing bad, must you tell? Do not forget,' he added, very gravely, as the gentlemen hesitated to answer his question,—‘Do not forget dat de somebody is more good as all de peoples in de world, and you love she very dear.’

Mr. Phillips glanced at Mr. Tuttle, and shook his head as if to say that he did not care to answer that question. Mr. Tuttle was silent also for a few moments, looking into the questioning face before him as if he were searching there for a reply.

‘It is very hard,’ he said at last, ‘to say what would be right in such a case, Giuseppe; especially when we do not know what the wrong deed has been. Can you not persuade the person who has done the wrong to confess it, and set it right, so far as possible?’

‘No, Meester Tootle, me do all me can. Me—I—say, “please, please,” so hard as me can; but ’tis no good.’

‘Does the wrong-doing of your friend hurt some one else?’

Giuseppe nodded his head.

‘And can it be set right, if you tell what you are now hiding?’

Every vestige of colour left the boy’s face.

‘O Meester Tootle! don’t,’ he said, with a little gasp; for it seemed to him as if he were tearing his secret out of his heart, whether he would or no. Why did he talk about hiding, unless he knew the whole story?

Mr. Tuttle sat thinking for a while, then he said kindly, ‘Do not answer me just now if you had rather not; but I think, my boy, that if some one whom we love has wronged another, and we can make it all right by telling the truth, we ought to do so, if we cannot

persuade the wrong-doer to deal fairly by the injured person. Suppose that you had stolen that suit of clothes you have on from another boy, and I knew it, do you think that it would be right for me to let you keep the clothes because I loved you and did not know the other boy to whom the clothes really belonged ?'

'You would tell ?' asked Giuseppe, anxiously.

'I should do my best to persuade you to return the clothes to the owner ; but, if you would not do so, I should have to tell him that you had taken them.'

'Dis is more as clothes,' said Giuseppe. 'Badder, much badder as clothes. If mine friend do go to prison, what I do den ?'

'My poor child,' said Mr. Tuttle, looking pityingly into Giuseppe's distressed face ; 'if it is as bad as this, you have indeed a hard question to answer.'

'You would make me go to prison, if I don't tell 'bout dose clothes ?' asked the boy again, as earnestly as before.

'Giuseppe, I will tell you what I should do with you. I should beg you to tell the whole story yourself ; if you would not, then I should go to the other boy and tell him all about it, and let him know also how much I loved you, and how hard it had been for me to make up my mind to be honest and true ; and I would tell him, too, every good thing I knew of you. I do not think he would want to put you in prison then.'

'And if you tell he,' broke in Giuseppe, eagerly, 'if you tell he me did not steal de clothes first time ; me find dem and take dem home, and love—oh, no ! 'Tis so much more as clothes ! She love she so dear ! Mine Marie ! Mine Marie ! What me do for mine Marie !'

He paused suddenly, glanced at both gentlemen with

a look of affright, and seeing that he had betrayed himself in his eagerness, flung himself upon Mr. Phillips' shoulder in an agony of crying.

'Don't be frightened, my boy,' said Mr. Phillips, kindly, after letting him cry in peace for a while; 'you have not told your secret. We only know that Marie has done something wrong; but we do not know what she has done, nor should we hurt her if we did.'

That positive promise did a great deal toward restoring Giuseppe's tranquillity; and, in a few moments, he lifted his head, and dashed the tears from his eyes in a shy, embarrassed manner.

'Me 'shamed to be so baby,' he said, apologetically; 'but me feel so bad. Me—I—have tell you 'tis Marie. I don't mean to,—but I have. What I do now? I cannot let mine Marie go to prison.'

'Let me tell you what I should do, Giuseppe,' said Mr. Tuttle. 'I should go home to Marie and try once more to persuade her to confess the wrong which she has done, and to do what she can to repair it. If she positively refuses to do so, then tell her that you will have to confide her secret to us and act as we think right about it. You may tell her that we will do our very best to save her from punishment; and if she is sorry for what she has done and will try to do better, we will do all we can to help her to earn an honest living. But, Giuseppe, if she will not listen to you, nor be persuaded to return what she has stolen,—well, then,'—as Giuseppe gave a start and put up his hand in deprecation of such an accusation,—'if she refuses to return that which she has in her keeping to the rightful owner, the only fair and honest thing for you to do is to tell the whole truth yourself. It seems, from what you

say, that this matter is no small affair, either to Marie or to the person whom she injures; and the greater the grief or loss of the owner, the stronger and more urgent is your duty. I am speaking very decidedly, my boy; but I think that there is no question at all as to what you ought to do. I know it is very hard for you; but, Giuseppe,' and he drew him close to his side, 'we must always do what we know to be right, and leave the rest to our Master. He will make it all work out for our good. Sometimes things look very much twisted to us, and we scarcely can see how they can possibly be made straight; but our Lord sees clearly when everything looks dark to us, and we must do our duty, and leave the consequences to Him. He will lead us safely out of all danger.'

'Like He bring Meester Pheelleeps for me when Casola take me,' said Giuseppe, his face lighting up with a sudden brightness. 'Yes. I go home to Marie, and I beg she dis night, and in de mornin' once more. Mine poor Marie, she will cry; she is so soft inside. It most make me cry to sink 'bout she. But me ask de dear Lord—all de way home me ask He—to help she to be good, and to make she glad. Now me go home and beg she.'

'Frank,' said Mr. Phillips, when Giuseppe had bidden them good-night and left the room, 'you talk to that boy as if he had been through a Christian experience, as people call it. Do you really think that your teachings of last Sunday in your school, and of last evening, have turned a little street outlaw into a saint? Do you think that that sort of thing can be done in a few hours?'

'In the first place,' said Mr. Tuttle, smiling, 'I never should have thought of Giuseppe as a "street outlaw";'



he does not seem to me to come under that head at all. He is far too gentle in disposition, and too easily controlled by his affections to be termed an "outlaw" now at least; although that very docile temperament might have been his ruin in time to come if he had fallen into very bad hands. As to his being "a saint," I suppose that you only mean that he seems already to have learned to love and trust the Master ?'

'Well, yes,' assented Mr. Phillips. 'But it appears to me that he has made very quick work of it; it looks like a sort of instantaneous conversion. Do you believe in those things ?'

'Yes, I do. I heard of one the other day on the very best authority. A friend of mine, whom I trust completely, told me the story. He had picked up a street waif and showed him some kindness, fed him, clothed him, and gave him employment. This man told me that he fully believed that he could now do anything he pleased with that boy, and related to me a touching story of the child's having—only the second time that he saw him—crushed to atoms beneath his heel, his fiddle, his only possible means of support, in case his new friend should fail him, simply because the friend had made some little objection to its use. That man believed in this boy's love for and trust in himself, believed in it so fully that this evidence of it fairly brought the tears to his eyes, and his eyes are not used to tears. Why should I refuse to believe in this same trust and love when it is given with the same glad assurance to our Lord, Austin ?'

'Oh, but that is quite a different thing !' said Mr. Phillips somewhat impatiently.

'I do not see in what way it is different. Giuseppe's

loving, grateful heart has gone out to the Christ who lived and died for him, just as it did toward you. It was very sudden. It surprised me, as, in our strange want of appreciation of God's ways and meaning, we often are surprised by His doings. The story of Christ's love came to him like a revelation, and his glad heart, opened already to all sweet influences by your own charity and kindness, took the Lord into its love and confidence, as it had taken you. I have no liking for those terms, instantaneous conversion, Christian experience, and the like, especially as applied to the very young; but I do believe that we do great injustice to the marvellous attraction of the story of the cross when we refuse to take, as evidence of love to Christ, words and deeds which we would receive as all-sufficient proof of devotion to ourselves. You cannot give me one reason, Austin, why you should have been more successful than He in winning Giuseppe's easily won love.

'He certainly seems to be in earnest,' said Mr. Phillips, 'and, if it makes him happy, I suppose it is just as well; but it does seem a strange thing to me. There, now, don't say that these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes. I see it all in your face, Frank; but you and I can't think alike on these matters, you know. I shall not disturb our poor little Italian's faith by my unbelief; don't be afraid of that. It is a curious thing about that girl, isn't it? I wonder if she is really in danger of being arrested for theft.'

## XII.

### TURNED OUT.

It was about nine o'clock when Giuseppe reached home, and long before that time Marie had made up her mind very determinately what she should do when he returned. Poor Marie's temper was not only very quick and violent, but very vindictive also ; and no loving mother, nor wise teacher, had ever given her one word of caution or advice. Since the first day that she could remember in her life, she had been queen of her little realm, and a queen as absolute and autocratic as any who ever sat upon a throne. Her father and mother had died before her recollection, and her only brother had always been her patient and uncomplaining subject. She had been so vastly his superior in tact and judgment, and in that wordly wisdom which seems to be inherent in the nature of street children, that he had never even thought of opposing her somewhat tyrannical will ; and, indeed, the least whisper of such an audacious thought would have been met by a storm of wrath and indignation which would almost have annihilated the meek and faint-hearted Joe.

And Giuseppe had been almost as tractable as his more weak-minded friend ; for, although his own temper was by no means slow or torpid, and his character strongly marked and decided for a boy of his years, he was at the same time very gentle in disposition, and was always guided most easily by his gratitude and his

affections. On that morning when Marie had rescued him from starvation and death, she had secured to herself his undying loyalty and love ; from that day he had obeyed her implicitly, and, knowing no rule of right and wrong, save her extremely one-sided code, had followed her directions without a moment's hesitation, even when they led him to absolute theft and fraud. Many and many had been the lucrative deceptions or small robberies which Marie's fertile brain had planned, and Giuseppe's quick deft hands had carried out.

But now a new impulse had been brought to bear upon these very points in his character upon which his first friend had played so successfully. The same unquestioning faith which had yielded to her authority had been touched by a mightier Hand ; the same grateful love which had returned in such lavish measure the kindness and affection which she had so generously bestowed upon him had begun to answer to that grander, truer love of which until now the boy had never heard. His heart had been absolutely taken captive by this new Friend, so suddenly revealed to him ; and he could no more have refused to listen to and obey His teachings than he could have set himself in open defiance of Marie's desires when he knew no holier impulse.

But this was something that Marie could not brook. Worried and anxious indeed she was with regard to little Cousine, as she sat by the small fire with the child on her knees all through the evening ; but that was not her only feeling. Her anger against Giuseppe swallowed up, for the time, even her grief for Joe, which only presented itself to her now as an added reason for her indignation.

And certainly there seemed great excuse for her

resentment. Knowing nothing of the influence which had begun to mould the character of the boy, and which already, by its strong, upholding force, was making him equal to a struggle such as had never met him in his life before, her whole heart was burning with jealousy toward these two men (for she included Mr. Phillips in her wrath) and this woman, who, to use the expression of her own thoughts, had 'gone and cheated her out of Gossip.' And so, between outraged authority and dignity, jealousy, and a great fear and dread of losing little Cousime, the girl's heart was in a perfect tumult of self-pity and of rage. She sat very still; but any one who had been there to see the play of unchecked passions in her white face would have known that she was suffering very deeply, and that Giuseppe would suffer in his turn.

'There he is,' she said to herself at last, as she heard a footstep stumbling up the dark stairway. 'Baby, I'll lay you in the closet to-night. He shan't even see you, to kiss you good-night.'

As she lifted up her set face, after laying the child, warmly wrapped in everything which she could gather together for her, on the heap of rags in the closet, she looked as if she might have been forty instead of sixteen years old; she was so haggard and so worn.

'Marie,' whispered a voice at the locked door. 'Open Marie; 'tis Giuseppe.'

She went to the door and unlocked it.

'You may as well leave it open,' she said, as he turned to close it, a work of some time and trouble, owing to the crazy condition of its hinges. 'You may want to go right out again. Have you told that man about Cousime?'

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'No, Marie,' and he came close to her, and put his arm around her neck ; but she flung him roughly off.

'Stop ! I won't have none of your cossetting, you that wants to be so cruel to me and baby. Sit down there, and listen to me. This thing has got to be settled once for all ; and it'll be the worse for you if you don't mind.'

Giuseppe seated himself, in obedience to this order, on a half barrel which had been brought in from the street a day or two before, and sawed in two to make a couple of seats. Marie occupied their one chair, which had been rudely fitted with a most unworkmanlike-looking leg. It was very touching to note all these small changes in the poverty-stricken little home, for no one had ever thought of trying to make it home-like until Cousime had come to bless it ; and now Giuseppe seemed to be plotting to ruin it again.

Some thought like this struck him, as he glanced around him ; and he put out his hand, and uttered an entreating 'Oh,' as Marie began to speak again in the same harsh, incisive voice.

'Hush,' she said, sternly. 'I won't have no noise now, no fuss made. I've got something to say to you, Gossip ; and you can just answer yes or no, and nothing else. If you say yes, and mean it, real honest, you can stay here with me and Cousime. If you say no, you can go straight out of that door, and never come back.'

'Marie !'

'Hush ! Don't Marie me no more. My name ain't Marie, nor never was. Now listen. Will you give up these two men, Phillips and Tuttle, and this nonsense about Cousime's mother, and come back to me and Cousime to be with us just as we used, or not ? I don't

mean give up your place with Mr. Phillips ; but I mean give up all this grand friendliness, and all this fuss about what they call right and wrong, and love me and mind me like you used to. Don't be too quick to answer ; for I tell you, Gossip, it's once for all. If you don't give up this nonsense, you walk right out of that door, and you never see me nor Cousime again.'

'Marie !'

'Hush !' said Marie, authoritatively. 'I told you yes or no, and not a word more.'

Giuseppe's tremulous lips suddenly grew firm ; and he rose from his seat and fronted her with a face as stern as her own, although it was as pale also as hers.

'You must hear me,' he said, carefully avoiding the use of her name. 'You send me 'way while ago wiz bad words. You call me tief, you say me steal leetle Cousime. Dat make me feel so bad me cannot tell what me do. But bimeby me say, "Giuseppe, she do not mean so ; she is you own, dear Marie. She mad wiz you now ; but bimeby she be glad wiz you. Go home and say sweet words to she." So me come home, and you will not let me say no words ; and you speak to me like you sink me love Meester Pheelkeeps and Meester Tootle better as mine Marie ; and you tell me dat me must not love dem, and, if me do love dem, me must not love you. Is dat de sing you say ?'

'Yes,' said Marie, coldly, 'quite unmoved by his earnestness, and his manifest effort to control himself.

'Den I say, dat is a sing dat cannot be. I love mine Marie better as all de world ; she is mine friend when dere is no oder friend for me ; when me hungry, she give me to eat ; when me die, she make me live. Dere is only One 'noder—One dat love me more as Marie. He

is de One who make Marie and give she to me : 'tis de Lord Christ. Marie, me do not know how He come, but He is here,'—and he laid his hand on his breast,—‘and He do say to me, “Giuseppe, love Marie, love her dear as dear ; but do not tell de lies ; do not steal.” Marie, Marie, do not look at me so hard ! Do not hate me ! It hurt me ! It make me die !’

He sprang toward her with outstretched arms, in his longing and pain ; but with one last hope in his evident wretchedness, she tossed his clinging hands aside.

‘ Answer me, once for all !’ she said, excitedly. ‘ Will you promise not to whisper one word about Cousime ? Yes or no ?’

He stood and looked her in the face. She was terribly in earnest ; and she was all he had in the world. It was a great and cruel wrong which she asked him to hide ; but if he revealed her secret, she would suffer bitterly, even if she were not punished. ‘ All at once the recollection of Mr. Phillips’ message to her came into his mind.

‘ Marie,’ he said, speaking more calmly again, for this new hope quieted him somewhat, ‘ I do not tell dem any sing 'bout Cousime, but I do tell dem I am in great troubles. Den, when me talk and feel so bad, me say somesing 'bout you, and den dey know you have troubles. And dey say, come and tell dem, and dey be good for you, and take care for you, and give you some work, and try for you not to be punish. Oh !’—

She heard him so far, with her frightened but still fierce eyes fixed on him ; and then, in her passion, she caught him and struck him on the head again and again, with such force that the boy’s brain fairly reeled beneath the blows. But, the next moment, he had disengaged



himself from her grasp, and stood before her with a countenance as disfigured with fury as her own.

'You beat me!' he screamed, stamping his foot upon the floor. 'If you was not woman, me kill you. You is bad, bad, bad!' and then, in the excitement of his anger, he broke forth into his own language, and poured out a tirade which Marie, of course, failed to understand, save for the wild denunciation of his voice and gestures. She stood looking at him, almost terrified by the storm which she had aroused; but when, his passion having spent itself, he turned toward her, again wanting to make peace, she repelled him as if he were the only one in fault.

'Oh, yes!' she said, scornfully; 'now you want to make it up; but that won't do. It's all of a piece. You throw me off for your grand new friends, and make a terrible fuss about telling lies and stealing and such, because it suits you; but you make no bones about flying into a rage, and calling me every wicked, ugly name you can think of!'

'Me so sorry, Marie; me so sorry me say bad words. Me tell Meester Tootle me not say dem no more; and now me do.'

'Meester Tootle! Meester Tootle!' replied Marie, mockingly. 'There's nobody else in the world now but Meester Tootle. You'd best go off to him, and be quick about it too. I don't want you here. I know it's a bad night. It's snowin' and blowin' like anything now; but I don't care for that. You've got to go, storm or no storm, unless you mind what I say.'

'Marie, you mean dat what you say? I must go?'

'Yes, you must. You're afraid of this cold wind, are you?'

'No, 'tis not de wind ; 'tis you, Marie. You mean so ?' I must go, and nevare come back no more !'

'No, never.'

'Nevare come back to mine Marie, who is mine home.'

'I ain't your home,' said Marie, snappishly. 'A home's the place you live in. You don't live in me, do you ?'

'I b'lieve me do,' said Giuseppe, softly, with his dark eyes fixed beseechingly on her hard face.

'You ridiculous thing !' said Marie, her heart failing her in spite of herself. 'Idea of calling a girl a home !'

'Den what is de home, Marie ? 'Tis not dis old room ; 'tis what me love in de old room. You make me go from dis place ; but come wiz me, Marie, den me take all de home wiz me.'

'Now, see here,' said Marie. 'This has got to stop, and she walked up to him, and laid her hand heavily on his shoulder.

Giuseppe drew back, and lifted up his hand warningly.

'You don't beat me no more, Marie,' he said, firmly. 'Me sorry me say bad words to you, but me will not let you beat me 'noder time.'

'I'm not going to beat you ; but, if you wont promise this minute to mind exactly what I say about baby, I'm going to turn you out of that door right off, and you shall never come back, or see me or Cousime again. Answer now, quick ! Will you promise ?'

'No ; me cannot.'

'Then go,' and she gave him a push toward the door.

'Stop, Marie. If you mean dis, me go ; but me will not be push. Me go me own seff. You mean dis what you say ?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Me go out in de cold night, all lone, wiz no Marie, no Cousime, nossin' but Giuseppe?'

'Yes.'

'Me nevare come home no more; nevare, nevare, nevare?'

'No, never.'

He stepped past her, as if to go to Cousime's usual cradle, the old bureau drawer; but the girl placed herself quickly before him.

'Where are you going?'

'To kiss leetle Cousime good-bye.'

'No; you shan't do nothin' of the sort. Kissin' her, and then betrayin' of her, indeed!'

'Den you don't say good-bye to me neider, Marie?'

'No; I don't want you to get anything good when you're doin' your best to ruin us.'

She turned her back on him as she spoke, for her heart was relenting even now, and she dared not trust herself to look into his face any longer. There was a little movement behind her; then a creaking of the old broken stairs. She turned her head to listen. Creak, creak, creak! Was he really going? She had not supposed he would in the end. She had thought he would yield. Indeed, she thought so now, and she listened eagerly for the sound of his returning footsteps.

After a while, finding that they did not return, she stole out to the head of the stairs, and bent her head to hear more distinctly. The wind was howling fearfully around the house, for the dark evening had settled down into a night of storm. At the head of the stairs a little heap of snow lay, drifted in through the open crack of a window. She went in, and bringing out some paper from her room, stuffed the crack closely, listening sharply

all the while for some sound of approaching footsteps. Then she went back again, and looked up at her own ceiling, at the piece of board which—standing on her shoulders supported by Joe's long arms—Giuseppe had nailed over the hole through which the snow had often fallen into their room, uncared for until little Cousime came, and they began to strain every nerve and every faculty for her comfort and pleasure.

How the wind did howl! Surely it never had shrieked around the old house so before; and the snow too, with what a snap it struck the window! It must be hail, and not snow—sharp, stinging hail.

One! two! three! Twelve o'clock, striking from the church steeple. Every refuge and lodging-house would be shut!

It was an awful night, and she had had no idea that it was so very late. How long they had been talking, and she had thought it only a few minutes! Perhaps Gossip had not gone out, after all. He might be in some of the lower halls; perhaps even in the first one beneath their own. She would go and call him, and tell him to come back for the night, and they would talk it all over in the morning.

'Gossip!' she called, softly, over the stairs. 'Gossip!' But no answer came back.

'Gossip! Come up and we'll be friends.'

A rat squealed out from the farther end of the hall, and then ran past her, rushing over her bare feet in his fright and haste. She sprang back with a little cry, but returned to her post again the next minute.

'Gossip! Gossip! Do answer if you're there. I'm sorry I was so ugly. There, do come back.'

Still no answer; yet she felt almost sure he must be

somewhere in the house, and she called again and again. By and by she went back to the room, peeped into the closet to make sure that the baby was still asleep, and finding her lying with her soft, rosy cheek pillowed on her chubby hand, looking as comfortable and as peaceful as possible, took her candle in her hand, and went carefully down the stairs.

‘Gossip! Gossip! Gossip!’

The whisper echoed through the silent halls and down the quiet stairways, as she passed on on her unsuccessful search. The dim light of the tallow candle cast weird shadows all around her; the rats and mice rushed to and fro from every nook and corner; and the howling wind made the music for the wild dance of shadows and rats. But Marie was not afraid. She walked on, peering into every corner, peeping into every unlocked closet, searching everywhere for Giuseppe, until at last she reached the outer door.

‘Well!’ she said to herself as she stood there, candle in hand; ‘he ain’t here; that’s sure. I wonder if he could have gone into Miss Farley’s and asked her to take him in for the night. But no, it was too late. And he wouldn’t have told on me, anyhow; I know he wouldn’t. He wouldn’t never go back on me like that. He’s such a lovin’ little chap. Whatever has got into him about Cousime, I wonder? Well, I must get him back anyhow; I can’t let him freeze to death out here in this wind and snow.’

Extinguishing her candle, she hid it in a hole in the floor, and quietly opened the house door. A gust of wind struck her as she did so, seeming to chill her to the very heart, and tossing to and fro in mocking play the scant folds of her thin calico dress. Bracing herself

against it, she closed the door, and looked up and down the street.

'Gossip!' she called again, looking either side of the doorway to see if he might be crouching in its shelter.

'Gossip, dear!'

'Gossip, dear!' echoed a maudlin voice, and a man staggering down the street put out his hand and patted her on the shoulder.

She struck away his hand, with a rough, unwomanly threat, and, as fearless as when in the house among the shadows and the rats, folded her arms across her shivering chest, and set off on her search.

Up and down the streets, in and out through the alleys and by-ways which abound in that wretched part of the city, down the steps of the cellars, up into every portico or shelter of any kind, she went with tireless persistence. Giuseppe, warmly clothed and within the comparative shelter of their home, she might oppose, and even abuse; but Giuseppe, beaten upon by this cruel storm, unsheltered, hungry, homeless, appealed with irresistible force to that motherly, protective instinct in the girl which was the controlling power in her character.

For three long hours she tramped the streets; and then she gave up the search, and, worn out, hungry, and half frozen with the cold, went home to sit down beside her little fire and rock herself to and fro, and finally to fall asleep on the hard floor.

### XIII.

#### A BRIGHTER MORNING.

LONG before Marie's tired feet had carried her back to her garret-room after her long and weary walk, Giuseppe was lying quietly asleep, in a strange bed, indeed, but in such an one as he had often slumbered in before he had had the good fortune to fall into her generous hands.

Half stunned at first by the blow which had so unexpectedly fallen upon him, he went down the stairs and out into the stormy night, without a thought either of appealing to the kindness of any of the other occupants of the house, or of finding shelter in some unoccupied corner, as Marie had thought he might do. For some little time he wandered through the streets without even thinking of looking for refuge; and when at last the fury of the storm roused him from the stupor of his grief, he found himself at some distance from home, walking in the direction of Mr. Phillips' office. His first idea on discovering his whereabouts was to go to the office and spend the remainder of the night there, for he carried the key in his pocket, and could enter without difficulty; but the next moment he changed his mind.

'No, me stay out here,' he said to himself half aloud. 'Maybe somebody find me if I go dere, p'liceman or somebody. Den dey tell Meester Pheelleeps, maybe; and den I have to tell 'bout mine Marie. 'Tis not more badder as plenty 'noder times when me stay out all night. Where me go now?'

He glanced around him, and his face suddenly brightened.

'Oh, dere is good place, in dat pipe,' and he crossed the street to the farther side, where lay four or five large water mains. 'Me sleep in dere, like me do many times. Oh, mine clothes! Dey will be all dirt!'

He stood reflecting for a moment, then, with another satisfied look, drew off his jacket and pants, carefully turned them inside out, and, putting them on again with a very contented air,—wet through though they were,—crept into a pipe which, being about in the centre, was protected at either end, and lay down there.

'What me do 'bout mine Marie?' he said again, his troubles coming back upon him as soon as he was safely established in his queer bed. 'And she have no monies. I forget to give she de monies,' and he felt downward for his dangling pocket, to make sure that the fifty cents which Mr. Phillips bestowed upon him daily was still safely hidden there. 'Dere it is. What make me forget dat? Well, she give me so much sings to sink 'bout dis night. She will have none milk for Cousime in de mornin'; only maybe Mees Fairley give she some. I know! I take dis and put him under de door in de mornin'. O Marie! Marie! I love you. What make you so bad to me?'

He turned his face over on his folded arms, and the hot tears rained down into the rusty pipe, until, worn out with excitement and faint with hunger,—for he had gone supperless to bed,—he fell asleep, with his brown cheeks yet wet with tears.

The light was just breaking in the east, the stormy night having been followed by a clear morning, when Giuseppe woke. He lifted up his head with a start,



wondering where he was and what had happened to him. Then it all came back to him, and he laid his head down again, and stretched out his limbs wearily. Oh, how stiff they were! Well, what did it matter? he thought drearily; for things looked very blue to him in the dim light of the early morning. He might as well lie there. He had no home, no Marie, nothing.

All at once his thoughts seemed to turn suddenly from the groove in which they were running. He saw a long white bed, on the pillows of which lay a face as white as the linen; but it was a bright, glad face, and the lips whispered faintly, 'I b'lieve He is close by;' and Giuseppe lifted up his head once more, and creeping out of his forlorn shelter, looked up into the morning sky, where a few stars were shining still.

'Me tell He, and He help me,' he said softly to himself.

'Dear Lord Christ, up dere, I am in such very big troubles; come help me. Dere is Marie and Cousime, and de moder of Cousime; and every one wants something dat belongs to de oder; and me want to be good, like you want me. Me don't know how me can do; me dess go now and leave dis monies for Marie, and den you come help me for de rest.'

Restoring his clothes to their original condition, Giuseppe turned his steps toward Baxter Street once more, and, reaching what so short a time since had been his home, went very quietly up the stairs, and peeped cautiously into Marie's room through the key-hole.

Marie lay on the floor sound asleep, evidently not having gone to bed at all during the night.

'What was de reason?' whispered Giuseppe to himself. 'Was she so mad as dat, as she could not go to

bed? She look pale and tired, poor Marie. Oh, dere is Cousime,' as a little cry sounded from within; 'I must go,' and, hastily slipping the money beneath the door, he sped down the stairs, as Marie, wakened instantly by the baby's cry, sprang up from the floor to go to her.

'Why, Giuseppe, what is the matter?' asked Mr. Phillips, meeting the boy at the office door two or three hours later in the morning. 'You look half-frozen. Has not the janitor made the fires yet?'

'Yes, Meester Pheelleeps, de fire is dere.'

'What ails you then? You must be ill. Your lips are blue, and your hands are fairly purple. Come in and make yourself thoroughly warm before you go out again in this high wind. Where were you going?'

'To take de papers to Meester Wells.'

'The papers can wait. You look as cold and starved as you did the day I first met you in the street. Giuseppe,' a thought striking him, 'have you had any breakfast this morning?'

'No, Meester Pheelleeps,' said the boy, turning his face from him.

'What did you do with the money I gave you last night?'

'Me—I—give he to Marie.'

'What was Marie thinking of, then, to send you out on a morning like this without any breakfast?'

'She don't send me out dis mornin'; I come by myself. I—'

'Well, never mind now,' said Mr. Phillips, as he hesitated confusedly. 'There is twenty-five cents. Go round to Potter's, and get a cup of hot coffee and a good piece of steak before you do anything else. Then take the papers to Mr. Wells, and come directly back to me.'

A little more than half an hour later, Giuseppe returned to the office, looking quite like himself. Mr. Phillips was engaged with a client when he came in, but he busied himself in sorting out some documents which his employer had given him to arrange, and, by the time that this was done, the gentleman had left the office, and Mr. Phillips called to him from the inner room that he wished to speak to him there.

'I want you to tell me, Giuseppe, how it is that you have had no breakfast this morning,' he said, when he had answered his summons. 'Is Marie angry with you?'

Giuseppe looked at him with eyes full of entreaty, but he did not reply.

'I want you to answer me, my boy; but first I will tell you why. Mr. Tuttle and I had a long talk about you after you left us last night; and we have come to the conclusion that the only safe and right thing for you to do is to tell us this whole story, whatever it may be, if Marie refuses to do so. In the first place, Marie is evidently doing some one a great wrong, and it is only just that the person whom she is injuring should be righted; then, if you join with Marie in hiding the wrong, you are almost as much to blame as she. Have you done your best to persuade her to confess what she has done?'

'Yes, Meester Pheelleeps; but I cannot do nossin'. She will not hear me.'

'What did she say?'

'She say I do not love her any more; she say she nevere, nevere love me more if me tell to any bodiea.'

Mr. Phillips put his arm around him as he stood beside him, for his voice was so pitiful that it touched him to the very heart.

'She say me have no home wiz her no more,' Giuseppe went on, in a still lower voice. 'Me all 'lone by myseff now.'

'When was all this?' asked Mr. Phillips, an explanation of the boy's half-frozen looks offering itself to his mind.

'Last night.'

'It is not possible that she turned you out of doors in that storm?' said Mr. Phillips, angrily.

'Don't be angry wiz she! Don't, Meester Pheelleeps! She let me stay if I don't tell. She don't push me out; me dess walk out my own seff. She tell me choose; 'tis Marie and to tell de lies, and to steal de dear sweet sing what belongs to some 'noder body; or, 'tis to tell de true, like de Lord Christ want me, and nevere see mine own Marie once more. But dis mornin', when me lie in de pipe, and me feel so bad 'bout dat, den somebodies seem to say to me, like Joe say yësserday,—“I b'lieve He is close by;” and I know dey mean de dear Lord Christ, and dat make me glad once more, and make me brave to come and tell dis to Meester Pheelleeps. Meester Pheelleeps,—and he turned himself a little in the embrace of the kind arm that held him, and laid his hand upon the gentleman's breast,—“I tell you dis now; but sink a leetle 'bout it 'fore I tell you. Sink dis in yourseff. Sink,—“Here is Giuseppe. He bring to me his dear Marie, who is his friend when he have none oder, who go hungry sheseff to give he bread, who lie on de boards to give he some bed, who do everysing good and kind for he. Dis poor Marie do somesing bad; she don't mean to, but she do; and when she find out it is bad, she will not make it good. De sing must be made good, and I must do what de dear Lord want

me ; but me will try,—Oh, me will try so hard as me can not to let some harm and punish come to dis poor Marie.' Will you sink dis in youseff, Meester Pheelleeps?'

'Yes, Giuseppe, I will. I promise, on my honour as a gentleman, to do my very best for Marie.'

Then the boy told his story. He described the finding of Consime, her welcome to their desolate home, the change her presence had wrought there, and Marie's delight in her and love for her, as no other lips could have pictured it. Then he went on to tell of his own first suspicions that all was not right ; and then of his having seen in the hospital the woman whom he felt sure must be the mother of the little child who had so grown into their hearts. He painted Marie's distress and sorrow in the gravest colours ; and Mr. Phillips only imagined (judging by its final results) what must have been the fierceness of the storm which had driven him out of house and home on such a night, for of that Giuseppe spoke not a word.

'So dis is all, Meester Pheelleeps,' he said at last, with a great sigh. 'What me do now?'

'I do not see that there is anything for you to do farther,' said Mr. Phillips, gravely. 'I think that you have been brave and upright, Giuseppe ; and I think that poor Marie has very great excuse too, although it will not be possible to allow her to keep the child, if the woman at the hospital is really her mother. I will look the matter over, and see what can be done ; but I promise you once more that I will do my utmost to save Marie from any hurt. If this woman is the baby's mother, she ought to thank you all a thousand times for the tender care you have given the child.'

'Tis only Marie,' said Giuseppe. 'Joe and me love

she, but dis is all. Marie feed she, and dress she, and take care for she, all de while. 'Tis all Marie—all, all.'

'Well, I'll remember that,' said Mr. Phillips, smiling. 'But do you really think, Giuseppe,' and his face grew very sober again, 'that she will not let you live with her any more.'

'She say, nevare, nevare, Meester Pheelleeps; and when Marie say somesing she mean dat sing very hard.'

'Then I must find another place for you; and for to-night you must go home with me.'

'No, Meester Pheelleeps, dat must not be,' said the boy decidedly. 'Go home to fine big house, and leave Marie in old garret? Oh, no! dat cannot be.'

'What will you do then? I cannot have you sleeping in the street again.'

'Me find some place for little monies; der is plenty place where me can find bed to sleep for leetle monies; but me cannot go 'way from poor Marie's old room, and stay in you nice house, Meester Pheelleeps.'

'Well,' said Mr. Phillips, 'we will leave that for the present. I promised to send you up to Mr. Tuttle's, and you had better go at once. His man wanted to go out to the country to-day, and I told him that I would send you up to wait on him. How would you like that?'

Giuseppe's eyes sparkled.

'But who will go out for you?' he asked the next instant.

'I do not wish any other errands done to-day.'

'But de fire. De jan'tor is gone. Who will make de office warm and nice for you?'

'Never mind about the fire, little Faithful. I am going out myself, and shall not want the fire much longer. Now put on your hat and be off, or Mr. Tuttle will

think that I have forgotten my promise. Oh ! one minute, Giuseppe. Tell me a little about this baby. How old is it ?

'I don't know, Meester Pheelleeps. 'Tis very leetle.'

'It cannot talk, then ? nor walk ?'

'No, she do not talk ; only she say, 'Coo-oo, coo-oo,' all de time ; and she can laugh,—Oh, she can laugh like any sing. She cannot walk ; but she can sit on de floor, and, when the chair is dere, she can take hold and pull sheseff up, and stand dere ; and den she clap she leetle hands on the chair, and dance she leetle feets, and looks dess so proud as any sing.'

'What is her name ?'

'We call she Cousime ; but de woman at dat oder place, she call she "Gracie."'

'She was living with you when I went to see you, wasn't she ?'

'She come that day ; but Marie hide she in de bureau-drawer.'

'I wonder what the girl would do,' said Mr. Phillips, reflectively, 'if I should go to call there again. I ought to see the child before I see the supposed mother.'

'Oh, please !' said Giuseppe, eagerly, 'go see her ; and be kind and sweet wiz her, like you do wiz me. Den maybe she be good, and tell you 'bout de leetle baby. But, Meester Pheelleeps, be so good as you can for she, 'cause she feel so bad. She sink Giuseppe is bad and cruel boy, and she sink he make she lose de dear leetle Cousime. 'Tis very bad for mine Marie, Meester Pheelleeps. Be dess so kind as you can for she.'

'I will,' said Mr. Phillips ; 'you may trust me for that. I do not yet know whether I shall go to see her or not ; but I shall deal gently with her if I do, although

I know very well that she dealt pretty hardly with you last night. But I cannot help excusing her, for things must look rather ugly to her as they stand now. Trust her to me, Giuseppe. I think that I am rather on her side than otherwise. The more I think over this story, the more I feel for your Marie. Now trot off to Mr. Tuttle, and I will see what can be done.'



## XIV.

### MORNING IN THE OLD HOME.

WHEN Marie raised herself from the floor in the early morning, in answer to little Cousine's sleepy wail, she was, at first, utterly surprised to find herself lying beside the dead fire, while the child lay in the closet, as far from her as she could be to be within the limits of her own domain. But the next moment she remembered it all, and the recollection brought to the girl a sense of such desolate loneliness as she had never felt before.

Joe was dead. She should never see his dull, listless face ; never hear the sound of his low, dreary voice : never listen to his weak, stumbling step staggering up the broken stairs again. And Giuseppe ? Where was he, with his merry face, his laughing voice, and his bounding step, all so unlike the brother who had slipped out of her life so suddenly ? It would not be a strange thing if he were dead too, turned out into the cold and snow at such an hour of the night.

She quieted the baby, and then went back into the outer room and began to lay a fire. Latterly, she had not had this to do ; it had been Giuseppe's task, and she had often wakened within the past few mornings to find a bright little fire blazing on the hearth, and the room comparatively comfortable ; but it was bitterly cold to-day. The baby cried out again before the fire was fairly burning, and Marie went and brought her out from her bed, thinking that she was hungry ; for she had not

wakened in the night, as she often did, wanting to be fed. She turned toward the table for the milk, as usual, forgetting for the instant that it was Giuseppe who always ran down to the store for it, and placed it there to be ready when she wanted it.

'O baby, dear, don't!' she said, impatiently, as Cousime, resenting this unlooked-for delay in the coming of her morning repast, began to struggle in her arms, and to fret and worry in a most unusual manner. 'What is the matter? Do you miss him so, too? I haven't got any milk, neither; nor a cent to get any. I'll have to ask Miss Farley to lend me a sup. Don't cry, baby, don't! I just can't bear it. O baby, baby you've cost me Gossip, anyhow!' and to her own surprise, as much as it would have been to Giuseppe's, if he had seen her, she bent her head down upon the child, and cried as if her heart were breaking.

For a few moments Cousime endured this new state of affairs in silence, then she rebelled, for she was cold and hungry, and, perhaps, worse than all, unnoticed. She did not enjoy this very uncommon treatment at all, and she showed her displeasure by bursting forth into an indignant wail, and by beating a tattoo with her little fat feet upon Marie's knees, with a violence which proved that, good-humoured as she was in general, she had a very decided temper of her own.

'Oh, come then,' said Marie, despairingly, as she rose from her seat. 'We'll go down and get the milk. What's that?'

It was a crisp, new fifty-cent stamp lying at her feet as she put out her hand to open the door.

'He's laid it there last night,' she said to herself. 'He's put it there when he stood so quiet at the door,

and I didn't dare look at him lest I'd take it all back what I'd said ; and after I'd just given him a beatin', too. O Gossip ! If you beant the forgivin'est, best-heartedest little chap as ever was ! I miss you every turn. Whatever will I do with you and Joey both gone ? And he's never got a cent himself, not one to get a bite with even, let alone a lodgin' ; for he gave me all he had yesterday to make up the rent. I don't believe he's had ever a morsel since his dinner. O Gossip, I just lied when I said I hated you ! I love you better than baby, heaps better. I must have you back, even if you do tell on me. Baby, I turned him out of doors last night into the snow and hail, and like enough he's froze to death !'

But Cousime did not care one bit for her grief and penitence. She only fumed and fretted, and, hanging over Marie's shoulder, kept time to the kicking of her feet with an equally emphatic slapping of her hands upon her nurse's back.

'Stop, you naughty child !' exclaimed Marie at last, irritated beyond her slight powers of self-control, and giving her an angry shake.

Then, as the baby put up a grieved little lip, she caught her close, and kissed her with such vehemence that poor, bewildered Cousime did not know whether to cry or to be comforted, but decided on the latter alternative, and nestled down on Marie's shoulder quietly again, as the girl left the room and went slowly down the stairs to the store for some milk.

'Why, good mornin', Marty. Where's Gossip this mornin' that you come after the baby's breakfast yourself ?' asked Mrs. Farley, as Marie entered the store.

'He's gone out,' said Marie, flushing a little. 'Please

let me have a little milk, Mrs. Farley, and I'll pay you to-night or to-morrow.'

'Oh, yes! take it and welcome. He didn't get his money last night, eh? Well, it'll be as good when it comes. Annie, give Marty a pint. You look dragged out, Marty. Poor girl, you're missin' Joey! ain't you? Well, he's better off, dear, far better off. You'd never have made nothin' out of poor Joey.'

Mrs. Farley's well-meant consolation was of very small account to Marie; and she took her pitcher in her hand, and went out of the store again without even attempting an answer.

She had not used Giuseppe's money. She felt as if she could not, at least until she knew what had become of him; and after she had fed the baby, and eaten only a mouthful or two herself, for the food seemed to choke her, she sat down and tried to imagine what that might be. The more she thought of it, the more sure she felt that he could have found no shelter, of which he would have availed himself, at that hour; and, the longer she allowed her mind to rest upon the idea that he had spent the night exposed to the pitiless beating of that sharp storm, the more her heart softened and melted toward him. If she only knew where and how he was this morning, she thought to herself, her lonely heart yearning after him as longingly as if she had not seen his face nor heard his voice in weeks or months.

She sat, and waited, and watched, hoping that he might possibly venture back to her, until quite toward noonday,—until her restless longing and anxiety grew to be perfectly unendurable; and, with a suddenly formed resolve, she sprang up and went down-stairs again to Mrs. Farley's room.

'Annie,' she said, finding Mrs. Farley's eldest daughter very busily and happily engaged in making a new dress for herself, 'would you take your sewing up to my room, and sit with baby a while? I want to go out of an errand. I'm going up to the hospital.'

'Oh, to see if you can get a look at Joey,' said Annie gently. 'Course I will, Marty. Stay just as long as you like.'

'And you'll be very careful of baby, and not let her stir out of the room?' said Marie, anxiously.

'Course not. Why should I, unless I brought her down here?'

'But I don't want her brought down,' said Marie. 'I think she got cold with my fetchin' her through the entries this mornin.' Don't fetch her out of my room; will you, Annie?'

'No, not if you're particular,' said Annie, rather wondering at Marie's unusual care, for little Cousime was a very frequent visitor in their apartments. 'You go along, and I'll keep her up there till you get back. I'm awful sorry for you, Marty.'

Having settled that part of the difficulty to her satisfaction—for it was Cousime's mother, and not the cold draughts through the halls, that she feared for the baby,—Marie put on her old shawl and a bonnet that Annie Farley willingly lent her, and went out.

But when she was out of sight from the house, she turned, not up town toward the hospital,—she dreaded the sight of Mrs. Miller far too much to venture there,—but down town, toward Broadway, in the direction of Mr. Phillips' office. She must see Giuseppe, and satisfy herself of his safety; if, indeed, he were safe. As to whether she should beg him to come back to her or not,

that she was debating within herself; but she must know where and how he was. She could no longer endure this miserable suspense.

For the last hour or two she had been tormenting herself with the idea that Casola might have regained possession of him; and, feeling that if this were so, it was herself who had put him in the man's power, her remorse and fear grew perfectly uncontrollable, and she determined to learn the truth, if possible, even at the risk of losing Cousime; for, long before this, she had found out that Giuseppe was even more precious to her than the baby herself.

For more than half an hour after Giuseppe left him, Mr. Phillips had sat in his office trying to make up his mind what was the best course to pursue in this somewhat difficult case, half smiling to himself all the while to think how much he had become interested in a matter so entirely foreign to his usual occupations and pursuits. Interested he most certainly was, so much so as to have brought him to the determination to give up the remainder of the day to the searching out of this matter, and the decision of the question of the parentage and proper guardianship of the little child who—unlike too great a number of her class—had so many who craved the blessing of caring for and watching over her.

Concluding finally that he would make an attempt to see Marie and Cousime in their home, although he greatly doubted whether he should gain admission there, he put on his overcoat, and was standing at the door drawing on his gloves, when a slight sound outside, apparently at the very key-hole, made him open the door; and there, to his surprise, stood Marie.

The girl turned on the instant as if to fly, but by a

quick movement, so adroitly made that Marie could not tell whether it was done with a purpose or not, he placed himself between her and the passage to the stairs which she must reach in order to escape him.

'Marie! it is Giuseppe's Marie, is it not?' he said, with his most pleasant manner; and Mr. Phillips' manner could be very pleasant when he chose to have it so. 'I am very glad to see you here. I have been really anxious to see you. Walk right into the office.'

'Anxious?' repeated Marie, her worst fears seeming to be confirmed by that word. 'About Gossip? Ain't he here?'

'No; he has not'—

'Seemed very well to-day,' Mr. Phillips was intending to say, but Marie, instantly concluding that he was about to tell her that Giuseppe had not made his appearance there that morning, interrupted him.

'He ain't been here at all?' she exclaimed, in a voice of infinite alarm. 'Oh, then Casola's got him, or he got froze to death last night. Dearie me! dearie me! Whatever will I do?'

'What is the matter, Marie? Don't look so agonized. Come in and tell me what the trouble is.'

He did not assure her at once that Giuseppe was safe and well, hoping that in her evident distress she might betray herself, and so smooth the way for him to let her know that the boy had already told him her story.

His calm voice quieted her for the moment, and she looked into his face without speaking, trying to read there how much or how little he knew of the truth. But Mr. Phillips' face was not an easy one to read when he chose to keep his secrets to himself. However, he looked kind and pitiful this morning, and surely, thought

poor Marie, he would not look so if he knew all. She forgot, in her great anxiety, that, unless he had seen Giuseppe since she had sent him away, he could know nothing.

‘What do you mean by saying that Casola has taken him again?’ asked Mr. Phillips, as she did not answer his first question.

‘I don’t care what you do to me,’ Marie burst forth, concluding from his manner that he was entirely ignorant of the occurrences of the past evening. ‘You can put me in prison if you like, if you only help me to find Gossip first. He said you’d got him bound out to you ; and that now you was just like his own father as to having a right to him, and Casola never could keep him out of your hands. I turned him out last night ! That’s what I did ! I was awful mad at him ; and I struck him over the head, and I told him I hated him, and turned him right out into the storm. And then I went after him, and tramped for hours, looking for him, but I couldn’t see a sight of him ; and I came back most wild ; I was that frightened of what might come to him. Then I hoped maybe he’d come back in the mornin’, for he’s an awful forgivin’ little chap ; but he didn’t, and now he ain’t been here ! Oh, what do you think has come of him ?’

‘Why, my poor girl, you need not be so distressed. The boy has been with me this morning. He is not in the office now, but he was here.’

‘Didn’t you say you hadn’t seen him ?’ asked Marie, sharply.

‘Certainly not. I said nothing of the sort. You asked me if he were here now, and I said no ; and was about to tell you that he did not seem well, and that I



had sent him up town, when you interrupted me. I am sorry that you have had such a fright. Giuseppe is quite safe, but he does not look at all well.'

'What ails him?' she asked the question almost in a whisper. The relief was nearly as overwhelming when it first came, as the distress.

'I hardly know. When I came in this morning he looked almost frozen; and, after some little questioning, I coaxed from him the truth that he had had no breakfast. I asked him what he had done with the money I gave him yesterday, and he told me that he had left it for you, as you had nothing beside. Poor fellow, he looked pretty thoroughly used up. I am sorry that he has quarrelled with you.'

'He didn't do no quarrellin' till I hit him,' said Marie. 'Then he broke out at me like a good feller; but I didn't rightly understand half he said, for he always talks his own talk when he gets mad. Did he tell you what we fit about?' and she tried again to read that very unreadable face with her keen, eager eyes.

'Yes. It was some fuss about that little child, wasn't it? It is a pity that you cannot all live together in peace. I do not know how much Giuseppe may have been to blame last night, Marie; but he certainly feels very badly indeed, now. He looks really ill to-day. He would do anything he possibly could to be friends with you again.'

'Would he come back?' asked Marie. 'If I'd let him, I mean.'

She had tried to ask the question carelessly, but she had caught the wistful tone of her voice, and tried to make up for it by the coolness of her last words.

'I did not ask him. I knew that he had no money

for to-night ; for you remember that I paid him a dollar the day before yesterday, in order that you might be able to make up your rent ; then I gave him fifty cents as usual yesterday, which was, of course, also a prepayment ; so to-day I owed him nothing. As he left that money with you yesterday, I knew that he had not a cent to obtain a lodging to-night ; so I proposed to him to spend the night at my house, but he refused. He said he would not sleep in a house like mine while you lived in your old room.'

Poor Marie ! Hers was not so difficult a face to fathom as Mr. Phillips'. Watching it all through this purposely cold and indifferent speech, he saw the struggle going on within her, and was not surprised when she exclaimed,—

'And he's gone away then without a penny, and never a place to go to, and had no breakfast, nor dinner, nor nothin' ! And there's his fifty cents lyin' in the bureau drawer under Cousime's bed to keep it safe. I ain't touched it, nor won't. Couldn't I get it to him some way ? How could you let him leave you like that, and you pretendin' to look out for him ?'

'He had his breakfast after I came down town and found out that he was hungry ; and I shall see him to-night.'

'Will you ? Oh, if I run for the money, will you take it to him so he can get himself a lodgin' ?'

'I was going over in your direction,' said Mr. Phillips, seizing upon the opportunity. 'I will go with you, and so save you the walk.'

'Oh, I don't mind the walk,' said Marie, in dismay ; 'and I'll be back in no time.'

'But I cannot wait. I was just starting out when you

came in, and cannot spare the time. We will go up together, and then I can attend to my other affairs afterwards.'

There was no help for it ; and Marie walked on by his side through the streets, inwardly congratulating herself that she had insisted upon Annie Farley's keeping Cousine in her own room.

But alas for her hopes ! Annie Farley was not always very particular with regard to keeping her promises, and she had considered this a very unnecessary one ; so, a young friend having come in to see her, she had carried the baby down-stairs, fully expecting to have her safely back in the attic again before Marie should return. The friend had just left ; and Annie, having walked a little way down the street with her, was retracing her steps when, who should she see coming toward her but Marie and Mr. Phillips !

Having very little doubt of the reception which she should meet with if Marie found her in the street with the baby, Annie darted into the next house to wait until Marie should have entered their own, intending after she had gone up-stairs to slip into her mother's room and let the girl find her there. She would know that she had broken her promise, indeed ; but that would be better than to be found on the street.

'If you'll wait here a bit, I'll run up and bring you the money,' said Marie, the instant they reached the door.

'I can just as well go up, and so save your coming down again,' said Mr. Phillips, wishing to see the baby.

'No, my room don't look fit,' replied Marie very decidedly. 'You can't come up. I'll be right back.'

She was gone in an instant, and Mr. Phillips, baffled, was thinking within himself that he would make an

excuse to come back and return the money, with a promise to make it good to Giuseppe, when a girl with a baby in her arms stepped up into the doorway.

Cousime's cheeks were ruddy, and her eyes sparkling with her little walk in the cold, and her head, from which the shawl in which she was wrapped fell as Annie brought her in, was one tangled mass of short golden curls.

'What a pretty child!' said Mr. Phillips, smiling at her as she passed him.

'Now isn't she just!' said Mrs. Farley, who at that moment came out of the side door of the store. 'Give her to me, Annie, and go in and help Jack. He's callin' for you. I sometimes wish she was mine, if I have a houseful; she's that winnin' and pretty.'

'She is not your own, then?' said Mr. Phillips, as Cousime grasped at the knob of his cane.

'No; she belongs up-stairs. Martha Giles takes care of her,—she's her cousin,—and does well for her, too, bein' but a slip of a girl herself.'

'What is the baby's name? Gracie?'

He asked the question in an indifferent tone, but did not fail to notice that the little one looked up with a start and a smile as he spoke the name.

'No; they mostly calls it baby; indeed, I don't think I rightly know its name.'

'How old is it?'

'That I don't know either, surely. I should take it to be twelve months or so. But I must carry her in out of the cold. Good-bye to ye, sir.'

'Gracie would be a pretty name for her,' said Mr. Phillips, as Mrs. Farley turned away. And again Cousime looked quickly up at him with her bright, sweet smile.

The next moment Marie came running quickly down

the stairs with a very perturbed face, which cleared, however, when she saw Mr. Phillips standing idly waiting in the doorway.

'Marie,' he said, as she held out the money toward him, 'suppose that, instead of taking the money for Giuseppe, I send him down to you. Would you take him in again?'

'Would I take him in! What! After his sayin' he wouldn't go home with you when I was in a wusser place. I'd take him in a minute if he'd come. I never knew how much I cared about him till he was gone.'

'Shall I tell him that?'

She stood and looked at him, the colour coming and going rapidly in her coarse, plain face.

'Yes, tell him,' she said at last, as if the words were forced out of her almost against her will. 'Tell him I'm awful lonesome without him and Joe, and I want him back. I'll be good to him. Tell him that; that I'll be good to him *whatever comes*. Remember just them words.'

'I will,' said Mr. Phillips, understanding her far better than she supposed. 'Marie,' he added, with a kindly impulse toward the lonely girl, 'you seem to be very much alone and unbefriended in the world; can I help you in any way?'

He looked so helpful and so strong as he stood there, his large figure almost filling up the narrow doorway, that she was almost tempted to take him into her confidence, and yet she was afraid.

'You're very good,' she said, after a minute's pause. 'You've been very good to Gossip, and now you seem right kind to me. Maybe you might do somethin' for me some day.'

‘Well, if I can I shall be very glad to do it. It seems to me that a girl like you must often need some one to help you. You must never be afraid to come to me.’

‘Thank you hearty, Mister, she said. ‘You won’t forget to tell Gossip?’

‘No; and I feel almost sure that he will come. But if he should not, you may make your mind easy about him; for I shall see that he is taken care of. Good-bye.’

‘Good-bye, Mister.’

She watched him on his way till he was out of sight, and then went into Mrs. Farley’s room for Cousine. She felt too spiritless to scold Annie for breaking her promise; and, as nothing was said of Mr. Phillips’ meeting with the baby, she suspected nothing, and Annie escaped the consequences of her misdeeds.

## XV.

### SPECIAL PROVIDENCES.

‘WELL, Frank, this is the first time I have ever travelled around in your boots,’ said Mr. Phillips, as he entered Mr. Tuttle’s room quite late that afternoon; ‘but I think I rather like it on the whole. There is a new sort of excitement in it that is quite enlivening.’

‘I always said that you would like it if you could be persuaded to try it,’ replied Mr. Tuttle, smiling. ‘So you have had a satisfactory experience. Let me hear all about it.’

‘After I have heard something about yourself. How are you to-day? You do not look much like an invalid.’

‘Oh, I am doing finely. I have no pain whatever in my side; and the doctor says I shall be out,—on crutches that is,—in a month if I keep on as I have begun.’

‘Good for the doctor! Well, I can play right-hand man for you for a month, or more, if you need me. Where is my small boy?’

‘Down-stairs. I sent him to the kitchen for his dinner.’

‘He has told you his secret, I suppose.’

‘Yes, poor fellow. It was rather a hard case for him to decide, wasn’t it?’

‘Indeed it was. He did not tell you all that he went through with last night, did he?’

‘Simply that Marie had been very angry with him,

and totally refused to give up the little child, even if this woman turned out to be the mother,' said Mr. Tuttle.

'She gave him a pretty thorough thrashing, I rather think, from her own showing. (I have seen her to-day), and then turned him out of doors at midnight in that storm.'

'He never told me a word of that. Where did he sleep?'

'In one of those water-mains in Wall Street. Rather a cool bed for such a night. I tell you what it is, Frank; that fellow will make a man to be proud of yet. He has more pluck than any boy of his age that I ever met with.'

'It was something stronger than pluck that carried him safely through last night's difficulties and temptations, Austin. The boy has evidently, until within the past few days, been like wax in the hands of this girl, to whom he now so unwillingly stands opposed; but "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." It all lies there, Austin. You know that as well as I.'

'Here he comes now,' said Mr. Phillips. 'Come in,' as a slight rap was struck on the door. 'You are just in time, Giuseppe. I have been going to and fro on this baby business of poor Marie's ever since you left me; with more success for the mother than for Marie. I suppose that there is no possible doubt that Mrs. Miller is the mother of this child.'

'Is that so?' said Mr. Tuttle.

Giuseppe said nothing but, 'Oh, mine poor Marie!'

'Yes, I am very sorry for Marie,' said Mr. Phillips. 'But I will tell you my adventures. In the first place,



as I was leaving the office, intending to try to see her and her *protégée*, who should I find at the door but Marie herself,—come to look after you, Giuseppe, worried half to death lest some evil had befallen you last night. And, before I go any farther, I may as well give you the comfort of the message she sent you. She told me to tell you that she was very lonely without you and Joe: that she wanted you to come home to her, and that she would be good to you, whatever comes.'

'She tell you dis? she do!' exclaimed Giuseppe, his face one gleam of sunshine. 'Oh!'

'You poor fellow!' said Mr. Phillips, smiling. 'You have sprung out of the darkness into the light in one leap, haven't you? You may make yourself happy now, I think, for Marie has found out that she cannot do without you. But I must go on with my story. When she found that you had no money (I told her purposely that I had given you none), she insisted on going back for that which you left with her, and, hoping to see the baby and find out some particulars about her, I went with her, much against her will. She would not allow me to go up to her room; but, fortunately, while I was waiting for her at the door, another girl came in with this very child in her arms. So, despite poor Marie's precautions, I obtained a good look at her, sufficient to enable me to recognise a description of her. As to her name,—Gracie,—she knew it most undeniably. I spoke it twice without any particular emphasis, and both times she looked quickly up with a smile which put all doubt on that question to flight at once. I left the house, feeling—and, I must say, feeling very regretfully—almost sure that Marie's baby and Mrs. Miller's lost child were one and the same.'

'And den,—what next?' asked Giuseppe, breathlessly, as Mr. Phillips made a moment's pause.

'Next, I went up to the hospital and saw Mrs. Wilcox and Mrs. Miller. I told Mrs. Miller that I had heard from you of the disappearance of her child; and that, knowing something of the people in whose neighbourhood the baby had been left, I had thought it possible that I might find it if it were to be found. The woman was most intensely grateful, and before I left the hospital I was so divided between sympathy for her and for Marie, that I almost made up my mind that I must let the whole thing take care of itself. I felt as if I could not bear to be the means of deciding the case, either one way or the other.

'To make a long story short; Mrs. Miller's description of her child tallied exactly with the picture which my look at little Cousime had made in my mind, except that the child she described was younger, the mother having seen her last three months ago. Then I went to see the woman with whom she had put it to board. It seems that Mrs. Miller is a widow, and that, having no means of support after her husband's death, she placed her child with this woman and went out to service; and, being taken very suddenly ill, was unable to send any word to her of her whereabouts. The woman, Mrs. Wynne, supposed that she had deserted the baby; and, as she was wretchedly poor, took this heartless way of ridding herself of the encumbrance. However, she is penitent enough now, poor thing, and would, I believe, be almost as grateful as the mother if the child were found. And found she is, in Marie's little Cousime; there is no doubt about it. Mrs. Wynne's story of when and how she left her agrees exactly with the account of

Marie's discovery. Mrs. Wynne even described the shawl in which the baby was wrapped when I saw her this morning.'

'Oh, mine Marie! What I do for she!' exclaimed Giuseppe. 'What will dis woman do, Meester Pheel-leeps, to mine Marie!'

'She will love and bless her to the very end of her days, if she is half a woman,' replied Mr. Phillips; 'but she does not know as yet what she owes her. I said nothing to any of them except that I thought it possible that I might obtain some clue to the child; they have none of them the least idea that I could lay my hand upon her at any moment. And really, Frank,' he added, turning to Mr. Tuttle with a smile which had more gravity than merriment in it, 'if I had known what lay before me when I told you that I would undertake this thing, I do not know that I would have been so ready to follow your lead.'

'I thought you told me that you had rather enjoyed it,' said Mr. Tuttle.

'I did, in a certain way. These people's faces do light up so at a pleasant word, or an offer of more substantial aid, that it does one good. I left both of those women looking almost happy; but I tell you what it is,' Frank, —I had rather go without my dinner for a month than to tell this story which I have just told you to Martha Giles.'

'When does Mrs Miller hope to be able to leave the hospital?' asked Mr. Tuttle, after some little thought.

'Not under two weeks at least. Even then I do not see how she can take care of her child, for she is lame and walks with crutches. She was first taken sick with some disease of the brain, which was followed by a dis-

tortion of one of her limbs, which has crippled her. How she is to care for a baby who does not yet walk, I do not know.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Giuseppe, his eyes, which had been full of sadness, as they seemed to drink in every word Mr. Phillips spoke, all at once sparkling with delight, 'Oh! dis is some more spedjal prongs!'

'Some more what?' asked the astonished gentlemen, both in one breath.

'Some spedjal prongs. Meester Pheelleeps, does peoples be always hurt in de legs for spedjal prongs?'

Mr. Tuttle looked perfectly perplexed; but Mr. Phillips broke into a peal of laughter, so hearty and so irresistible that his friend, and even Giuseppe, after looking at him in amazement one moment, joined with him, perforce, in his merriment.

'Come, Austin, what is this all about!' asked Mr. Tuttle, at last. 'There is no withstanding the infection of your laugh; but I have not the smallest idea what I am laughing at.'

'Do you mean special providences, Giuseppe?' asked Mr. Phillips, with his face still all a-twinkle with fun.

'Oh, yes! dis is de word. Don't you see 'tis some more, Meester Pheelleeps?'

'I can't say that I do. I told him, Frank, that you would call your fall a special providence. You remember that I had just left you on the morning when I found him with Casola. But, Giuseppe, I scarcely think that Mrs. Miller would think that her lameness came under that head, as it hinders instead of helping her.'

'But for Marie, for Marie,' persisted Giuseppe. 'When Cousime cannot walk, and de moder cannot

carry she, den dere must be some oder bodies to carry she. Dis will be Marie.'

'Well, really,' said Mr. Tuttle, with another laugh. 'he has learned how to turn special providences to account. He certainly has caught the idea, if not the words.'

'Yes. He asked me what I meant when I used the phrase, and I told him to ask you; but it seems he has thought it out for himself. It is not a bad solution of our difficulty either, Frank. I wonder if any such arrangement could be made, and so the keenest edge be taken from this girl's disappointment.'

'Perhaps something of the kind might be done. Do you know anything of Mrs. Miller's circumstances? Of course, she is very poor.'

'She is not a pauper by any means; not now, at least. She was penniless almost, at the time of her removal to the hospital, and without a relative in the world, except her child and an uncle who has since died, leaving her, happily, some little property. The legacy is small enough, a tiny house in Harlem, I believe, and about two hundred dollars a year beside; but that will give her and her baby a home, and, as she claims to be an excellent seamstress, they need not suffer. Giuseppe's plan grows upon me more and more as I think of it, Frank. I had determined before this to provide a home in some more respectable place for these children; why should it not be with this woman? It would be a great advantage to them to be out of the city, and of course Mrs. Miller will have to have some one with her.'

'I do not see why it should not work well, if Marie will consent,' said Mr. Tuttle. 'The great trouble would probably be that Mrs. Miller must be mistress in her

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own home, and Marie is so very decided and self-willed. But then, on the other hand, she is capable and thoughtful beyond her years, and could be of immense service to a crippled woman.'

'I think that I will see her to-night,' said Mr. Phillips, emphatically. 'If she thinks well of it, I will propose the plan to Mrs. Miller to-morrow.'

'Well done,' said Mr. Tuttle. 'If you are travelling in my boots, as you call it, Austin, you are using them to good purpose; for they are quite unaccustomed to making such quick time. I do not carry things through in any such rapid, energetic fashion as this; I am too slow by far. My right-hand man does so much better than I, that I rather think it will be best for me to sit here in my chair and box and let him work.'

'Oh, I shouldn't wear well!' replied Mr. Phillips, laughing. 'I do feel wondrously interested here; but my work is all physical, you know. You go deeper, Frank, and touch what my hand could never reach. I wished that you were in my place this morning when I was talking to that desolate girl.'

His tone had changed completely as he closed his sentence.

'You might have said all that I could say to comfort her, Austin. Do not'—

'There, there, that will do,' said Mr. Phillips, sharply.

He did not know, of course, what his friend was about to say; but those two words were the first of that question which had been ringing in his ears for days,— 'Do not you moder tell you somesing 'bout He when you leetle boy?' and the association annoyed and vexed him.

'And as to the other matter, Austin?' asked Mr. Tuttle, yielding on the instant to his desire.

## XVI.

### THE DECISION.

SOME ten or fifteen minutes had elapsed from the time when Giuseppe left Mr. Phillips in Mrs. Farley's store, having proposed that he should spend a few moments there instead of waiting in the hall, before the gentleman knocked at the door of Marie's room. As he entered, the door being opened for him at his first touch upon it, he saw at once that peace was re-established between the two. They had come together to let him in, and they stood side by side, Marie's hand resting on Giuseppe's shoulder, while his arm was around her waist.

'You see that I have come back very soon,' said Mr. Phillips, as he took the chair which the girl offered him. 'I had something to tell you which I thought you would be glad to hear, and it was necessary that you should know it to-night. Giuseppe told you that I was coming. I suppose?'

'Yes. He told me just this minute. I'm glad you came. Gossip says as his own father couldn't have been better to him nor you and Mr. Tuttle's been.'

'Giuseppe is very grateful for small favours,' said Mr. Phillips, smiling. 'If he is as faithful and as true in time to come as he has proved himself within these past few days, he will well repay all that we have been able to do for him. Now about yourself, Marie. Don't look so troubled. I have something to tell you which I think will please you very much.'

She had shrunk back as he spoke with a sudden, quick clutch at Giuseppe, who stood beside her leaning against her shoulder as she sat on one of the seats made from the half-barrel. He put his arm around her neck, and smoothed her freckled cheek with his little dusky hand. But neither of the two spoke a word.

‘What I want to say to you concerns Joe,’ said Mr. Phillips, after a moment’s pause.

‘Joe!’ said Marie, with another start, but with a look of infinite relief. ‘Why didn’t you tell him, Gossip? Joe’s dead, sir. And he died away from me, too, at the hospital. Gossip was with him, but I was home with— with—everything’s come all of a heap.’

Her voice was very husky, and she dashed her hand across her eyes with a quick impatient movement; but no tears fell.

‘I am aware of that,’ said Mr. Phillips. ‘Giuseppe has told me; and, knowing how much you must have been troubled and distressed, we thought,—Mr. Tuttle and I,—that it would be a great relief and comfort to you if we brought your brother down from the hospital and buried him from the chapel where you and Giuseppe were last Sunday. It would seem a little less strange and painful for you than if he were buried from the hospital. He never was in the chapel in his lifetime, it is true, but it seems more homelike than the hospital; and we will have a few of the little children there to sing some of the hymns that Giuseppe enjoyed so much last Sunday.’

He had talked so long purposely, to allow Marie an opportunity to regain her self-control. She had sprung from her seat, tossing aside Giuseppe’s encircling arm, and was walking rapidly up and down the room with her



arms folded across her chest, looking more like a man struggling for the mastery over some strong emotion than like a weak girl. But the woman in her triumphed at the thought of the little children singing their sweet hymns around the brother whom she had pictured to herself as carried to his last resting-place by careless, unloving hands. She gave up, all at once, the proud, foolish conflict with her grief and tears; and, throwing herself upon the floor beside the seat which she had just left, hid her face there on her folded arms and cried like any grieved child. Giuseppe knelt down by her, and put his arms around her; while Mr. Phillips left his seat and walked toward the window.

He could not see very much from those tiny panes of greenish cracked glass; but he had not expected any such scene as this, and he did not quite know how to meet it. Giuseppe would be likely to manage affairs much better than he, he thought, in such an emergency, and so he left the girl to him.

As he stood at the window watching the few stars which could be seen from its narrow outlook, a little, murmuring, rustling sound close beside him, struck his ear. Neither Marie nor Giuseppe seemed to notice it; and, after a moment, as it continued, the gentleman turned to see what it could be. The old bureau stood at his side; and, as he turned, he looked down into the open drawer, Cousime's cradle. She lay there, kicking her little feet,—her hair, damp with her warm sleep, lying in rings on her forehead; her rosy face bright and smiling; and, as he looked at her, she stretched up her arms and laughed with such bewitching friendliness that he bent down and took one of her little hands in his big fingers. But Cousime was not content with that small

amount of attention. Grasping his fingers with both her hands, she tried to struggle to her feet; and as, fearing she might fall, Mr. Phillips put out his other hand to steady her, she caught that also, and in another moment was standing up in triumph, holding him prisoner.

‘Well, you make friends very easily,’ he said, wishing to attract Marie’s attention without actually speaking to her; and in a moment the girl was beside him, and had lifted Cousime, who turned instantly toward her from the bed.

‘Come back to the fire, Mister,’ she said. ‘You’ll excuse me, but I just forgot you was here at all. I didn’t even thank you, I believe. And, indeed, I don’t know how. Poor Joey! He always didn’t like strangers; and it’s been on my mind all day how dreadful lonesome it was for him up there; and I didn’t know if I could get to his buryin’. I was goin’ up in the mornin’ to ask. Indeed, I don’t know how you came to be so good, and me a stranger, and—and so awful rude and ugly as I’ve been to you, too.’

‘You will know us better now,’ said Mr. Phillips. ‘I think we shall all be friends. It was Mr. Tuttle’s thoughtfulness, not mine.’

‘But the money?’ said Marie, with a sudden after-thought, her face clouding with a look of dismay. ‘We’d save and scrape all we could, Gossip and I; but won’t it cost a great lot?’

‘We will attend to that. You and Giuseppe have quite enough to do to support yourselves. You need not be at all concerned about the money; that is already provided for.’

‘Mine good Meester Pheelleeps,’ said Giuseppe, under his breath.

Marie said nothing, but the eyes which she lifted to his face and instantly dropped again emboldened him to broach the subject of the second object of his visit.

'There is something else which I wish to speak to you about, Marie,' he said, and he noticed, as he spoke, how she tightened the clasp in which she held the child who lay in her arms. 'When I went up to the hospital this afternoon to see if I could make these arrangements for your brother, I saw there a woman who has lost her little child.'

'Yes,' whispered Marie, as he paused. She could not have forced another word through her white lips if her life had depended on it.

'I am sorely afraid that there is another grief in store for you,' Mr. Phillips went on; 'but it is a grief which I think can be greatly softened. The child of this woman, Mrs. Miller, was lost in the street. Mrs. Miller was taken very ill while living out at service; and the woman with whom she had put her baby to board thought that she had deserted it, and, in a moment of desperation, being herself in wretched circumstances, put the child on the street, thinking that she would be cared for by the police. She laid it in Crosby Street, in an area, wrapped in an old striped green and red shawl, and drew a piece of oil-cloth, which lay in the area, over her to shield her from the wind.'

'Yes,' whispered Marie once more, and she laid her hand, which was trembling as if with an ague, on Giuseppe's head; for he was kneeling at her side with his face hidden in her skirts.

'I knew the history of your little girl here.' Mr. Phillips' voice was growing somewhat constrained in its tone. It was very difficult for him to tell his story to

these two listeners. 'And I knew very well what a great pain it would be to you and Giuseppe, but especially to you, if it should prove that my fears were correct,—that Mrs. Miller's lost child and your little Cousime were the same ; so, before I said anything to you, I went to Mrs. Miller and obtained a description of her baby. The poor woman has not a friend in the world. Her uncle, her only relative, died just after she was taken ill, and her lost baby is all she has. She is a cripple, too. Poor thing ! when she clung to my hand this afternoon, and begged and besought me to do all I could to find her child, my heart ached for her. And, Marie, it has not ceased to ache yet ; for I am afraid that when Mrs. Miller finds her baby, her joy will be a great sorrow to you.'

She could not even say 'yes,' as he paused again. She only clasped Cousime tighter, and stared into his face with her tearless eyes.

'Her child's name is Gracie,' said Mr. Phillips, with a slight emphasis on the name.

Cousime gave a start, threw back her head over Marie's arm, and laughed a little gurgling laugh as she looked up into his face.

'Baby ! Don't ! O baby !' said poor Marie, sharply, finding her voice at last.

'Marie,' said Mr. Phillips, gently. 'I told you that Mrs. Miller was a cripple. She cannot move except on crutches, and so cannot, of course, take care of her child when it is found. She will need to have some one with her to be a nurse for the baby, and also to take care of her house ; for she has a little house in which she will live when she leaves the hospital. If this child, whom you have loved so much and treated so tenderly, is her

lost Gracie, do you think she could find any one in the world who would tend her so well as yourself'

Still she did not answer him, simply because she could not.

'I have not spoken to Mrs. Miller of this ; but I think that there could be no better arrangement made. This is no fit place for you and Giuseppe to live in, and it is especially unfit for a baby like Cousime. I had intended to offer to find a better home for you all ; and it seems to me as if this were the very best thing to be done, if my idea is correct. And you see for yourself, Marie, how little doubt there seems to be in the case. The child was found just where Mrs. Wynne placed her : this very shawl is exactly what she described to me, even to this square torn from the corner here ; the child herself answers the description equally well ; and you have seen how quickly she responds to her name. I am more grieved than I can tell you to have to bring you this fresh sorrow, Marie ; but I think that you must see that I could not do otherwise.'

'It ain't fresh,' she said, hoarsely, after a short silence. 'It's been borne in on me since Gossip told me last night that he'd seen the woman. I knowed it was comin' on me sooner or later. You've been very good to tell it all so pitiful and kind. Gossip, don't cry like that. If you think I'm a goin' to leave you for baby, I ain't a goin' to do nothin' of the kind. If baby must go, then she must. You and I'll hold on together, whatever comes. O baby !'

The child had been looking gravely up into her face, as if it understood that something was wrong ; and now she put up a grieved lip and began to fret.

'Why this is no time for you to cry, little one,' said

Mr. Phillips, cheerily. 'You haven't lost this mother: you have only found another. Come, Giuseppe, be a man now, and see what you can do to make Marie bright and happy. You have all had a very sorrowful and unhappy time; but better days are coming, I am sure. Mrs. Miller is a very sweet little woman, they all tell me at the hospital; and I think that my plan for you will work very nicely. I am going to leave you now to talk the whole matter over between yourselves; and you can tell me in the morning, before I see Mrs. Miller, what you think of it. If you say so, Marie, we might go up to the hospital in the afternoon and let Mrs. Miller see the baby. She is most wretchedly unhappy; and, if we mean to do what is right, we ought to put an end to her suspense as soon as possible.'

'I'll go,' said Marie, quietly. 'But as for livin' with her, even if she is baby's mother, I can't do it, Mr. Phillips. I can't give up Gossip. I found that out last night. I made up my mind this afternoon that I'd rather let baby go, if it came to that,—if this woman turns out to be her own, her very own mother, I mean, —Gossip made me.'

'Have you seen Giuseppe before to-day?' asked Mr. Phillips, in surprise, while the boy looked up at her as if to ask the same question.

'No; not since last night. But I suppose we can't never see somebody else givin' up everything they've got in the world for the right, especially if they're a good deal littler and younger than one's self, without feelin' as we would like to do somethin' ourselves. Can we?'

'No; I suppose not,' said Mr. Phillips, after a moment's hesitation. 'You will be at the chapel, then, at ten o'clock to-morrow morning; and we will go to the

hospital in the afternoon. Saturday is not a visiting day, but I am sure that they will let us see Mrs. Miller, under the circumstances. I shall go up early in the morning, and let her know that you are coming. You would like to have me propose my plan to her, would you not ?'

'Not if I lose Gossip by it,' said Marie, decidedly. 'I'd far rather stay on here, just as we've been.'

'I had not thought of parting you,' said Mr. Phillips. 'That would never do, I am sure. I intended to propose to Mrs. Miller to receive you both. If you take charge of her house and the baby, you will, of course, more than pay your own way ; she ought to give you a home, and something beside ; and as to Giuseppe, he will support himself without any difficulty. I shall give him regular wages, and he will pay his board.'

'That would be nice,' said Marie, her face brightening with pleasure. 'Twould be livin' real respectable, wouldn't it, Gossip ? If she would do that, Mr. Phillips, I'd try to do well by her. I would indeed,' added the girl, earnestly.

It was not a very large company which gathered in the chapel on the next morning ; but the simple little service did a great deal to comfort and cheer Marie's softened heart. Mr. Phillips was there, with the minister of the chapel, and one or two other gentlemen, and some ladies. The Farley's were all with her, and some of the other inmates of the house ; and, as she came in, she had seen Greig, the old Scotchman who had been so tender with Joe when he took him away to the hospital ; and every one looked so kindly at her as she came in.

The sunlight fell softly in through the windows, and lay on her brother's plain coffin like a golden pall ; and

the voices of the children, as they sang their sweet, glad hymns, and of the minister as he told the story of Jesus' love and compassion for Joe, and for us all, sounded like music in her ears. As she sat there, with Giuseppe close beside her, and Cousime upon her lap, she felt very peaceful and happy, and although a few big tears welled up, and then rolled down her cheeks, they were quiet, gentle tears which did her good.

When the service was over, Mr. Phillips brought a lady to her, and, telling her that she was Mr. Tuttle's sister, left them together. The lady had a pretty face, and a soft voice which took Marie captive at once; and when she told her that Mr. Tuttle wanted to see Cousime, and had asked her to beg Marie to bring her up to his house before she was taken to her mother, Marie consented without demur.

'Only, ma'am, she said, 'you see she ain't fit. We washed all her things, Miss Farley and me, and she's right clean and nice; but we ain't either of us much fit to go to see a gentleman.'

She had thrown off Cousime's shawl and revealed the little faded calico in which she had been dressed when she found her, the sleeves tied up with two bits of turkey-red calico which Mrs. Farley had given her.

'She looks like a picture,' said the lady, and to Marie's proud delight she leaned down and kissed the little rosy face. 'But she must be cold,' she added, laying her hand upon the old shawl. 'This is not warm enough for her in such weather. I know of a place near here, where we can find a little worsted hood and cloak for her.'

The hood and cloak were found in a small store close by. How often Marie had seen them hanging in the



window, and wished that she could buy them for her pet! Now they were her own; and Marie thought she was indeed a picture, with her face framed in the crimson border of the cap, and her dimpled chin nestling in the warm folds of the cloak gathered close around her neck.

They spent a couple of pleasant hours at Mr. Tuttle's house, and then Mr. Phillips and Giuseppe came up from the office, and they all set off for the dreaded visit to the hospital, Miss Tuttle, at Marie's earnest request, going with them. Miss Tuttle's fingers had been busy during those two hours, and the girl's cup of grateful happiness was full, when, just before they were to leave the house, the lady called her up-stairs and gave her a bonnet, and a dress and sacque hastily remodelled to suit her shorter figure. Marie's eyes filled again when she noticed that the suit was black; she had never even hoped to wear so much as a black ribbon in memory of her brother.

And when the hospital was reached, and little Cousine—little lost Gracie—lay in her happy mother's arms, Marie lay there, too. For one glad moment the mother had caught her baby to her with a cry of delight, forgetting everything and every one in the great joy of seeing her lost darling once more; but, in the next, she had opened her arms to take to her heart the girl by whose loving care her child had been preserved to her; and as Marie listened to the story of her agony at the loss of her baby, and heard her pour out her blessings and her prayers upon herself, she wondered that she could have thought, even for a moment, of refusing to restore her little one to her.

To Mr. Phillips' plan of uniting the two little families, Mrs. Miller had consented, not only readily, but with

the greatest satisfaction. She knew of no one to whom she could apply who could fill this place in her household, and had doubted whether it would be safe for her to attempt to keep house at all ; but if Marie and Giuseppe made their home with her, all difficulty would be removed, and it was decided that, as soon as she was able to leave the hospital, they should take up their abode in her little house.

For the present, it was arranged that Marie and Giuseppe, with Cousine, should be furnished with a more habitable room in the same house in which they now lived, Mr. Phillips making himself responsible for the rent ; for, miserable as their surroundings were, they would be warm and comfortable down-stairs ; and Mrs. Farley was so good a friend to them in case of need, that it was thought unwise to place them among strangers, even though a place could be found for them in a more respectable neighbourhood.

## XVII.

### CHRISTMAS DAY.

'WHO has come into Gaylord's house?' asked one of the Harlem postmen of an elderly woman who opened, at his knock, the door of the house which stood next a small two-storey frame building that for the past four months had testified by its closed shutters and doors, and its now snow-covered paths and portico, that it was tenantless and desolate.

'I don't know, I'm sure. There's been a young girl and a boy flying round there since early morning, putting things to rights, seemingly. I think somebody must have taken it, and must be wanting to spend their Christmas there, the two are working with such a will. I'll step in after a while, and give them a little neighbourly notice. Gaylord left the house to his niece, they say; but she is a young woman, with one child;—neither of these can be hers. I think she's let it to somebody; but nobody knows who they are.'

The talkative old lady stood in her doorway, peering over the fence into the next enclosure, and wondering about her new neighbours long after the hurried postman had gone on his way.

Very much surprised would the girl next door have been if she had known with what curiosity her movements had been watched. If she had thought of her

neighbours at all; it would have been in words something like,—

‘I don’t care for nobody, and nobody cares for me,’

as she went singing and chirping about her work. If there was any one thing that delighted the heart, engrossed the mind, and called out every faculty of this girl, it was to have in hand some hard responsible piece of work, the brunt and management of which rested upon her own shoulders; and just such a piece of work she had to accomplish to-day.

At the time that old Mrs. Lovejoy stood at her door, considering the best way of satisfying her curiosity without *appearing* curious, the girl was on her knees in one of the two small rooms on the upper floor, scrubbing away with the greatest energy, and singing at the top of a very strong and very unmusical pair of lungs. Already those two rooms, and the open attic which formed the other half of that floor, had been swept and thoroughly dusted, —walls, ceiling, and all.

‘Gossip!’ she called out, suddenly springing up and going to the window. ‘Gossip! are you keeping a good fire in the kitchen! I want some hot water.’

Giuseppe, who was just coming out of the door with a shovel and broom to clear the steps and the walk to the gate of the snow which lay upon them, looked up to the window with a face as beaming as her own.

‘Yes. I put some coal on him. He burns good,’ he said. ‘I sweep all de floor down here, Marie. ’Tis all clean for you.’

‘You’re sure you did it up nice; all the corners, and everything?’

‘Yes; he is so clean as I can make him wiz de broom

in de kischen ; and de oder rooms, where is de carpets dey look so nice as anysing.'

'Well, I'll come down and see,' said Marie, patronizingly. 'Bring me up another pail of water before you begin out there.

'Ain't this fun?' she said, as Giuseppe came toiling up the narrow little stairway with the pail. 'I never did have such a good time. The house ain't much dirty either ; the old man must have been a tidy old thing. We'll easy get it done to-night. There's only the entry walls to dust, and the stairs to scrub, and the kitchen floor and the closets to clean out, and the outside to tidy up. And oh, the pots and kettles to wash, and the delft ! Well, we'll get it done, if we sit up till midnight ; won't we, Gossip ? Now run down quick, and get your snow cleared off.'

An hour later, Giuseppe came in with cold hands and feet, but with ruddy cheeks and shining eyes, to announce that the outside of the house was in apple-pie order, and to demand very urgently the privilege of foraging in the lunch-basket which they had brought with them. Marie acceded most readily, having worked herself both tired and hungry ; and they sat down together in the tiny kitchen to enjoy their meal.

'It's just as well to eat before I scrub here,' she said, as she sat before the stove, with her cold feet upon the fender ; 'for not a crumb must we make when once it's cleaned up. Gossip, ain't it beautiful ?'

'Yes, more beautiful as anysing. De sun shine so bright, and de snow is so white, and'—

'Rat, tat, tat,' came sharply on the outer door.

'Who's that ? Run, open the door, Gossip. That's our first visit,' and Marie laughed merrily.

A little old lady stood in the doorway, with her wrinkled face surrounded by a worsted hood, and her bent shoulders warmly wrapped in a worsted shawl. The wrinkled face looked bright and friendly, and a basket peeped out from beneath the shawl. Gossip made a little bow, hid the thick sandwich which he held in his hand behind his back, and tried to look as if his mouth were not full.

'Please come in, lady, by de fire,' he said, holding the door wide open.

'Thank you, sonny. Yes, I will ; for it's very cold, though I've only come from next door.'

'Here is de fire, and Marie,' and Giuseppe threw open the kitchen door.

'Why, you're foreigners, aren't you?' said the old lady. 'How do you do, my dear?' and she held out her hand to Marie. 'Just eating a mouthful, eh? I thought maybe you'd be hungry, and not have much by you, being strangers, so I ran in, it being dinner-time, with some hot coffee and baked potatoes. Cold meat and bread, eh? I thought as much. You'll be glad of something hot. There's a couple of cups in the basket ; for I thought maybe you wouldn't have any just handy. Don't be bashful, and let the things get cold waiting. Here, my boy.'

Her nimble old fingers had already poured out a cup of coffee, prepared beforehand with milk and sugar, for Marie ; and now she handed another to Giuseppe.

'Are you coming here to live, or are you only cleaning for some one else?'

'We're all comin' ; Mrs. Miller and the baby, and Gossip and me,' said Marie, her tongue readily unloosed

by the kind-hearted old lady's generosity. 'Mrs. Miller and the baby is comin' to-morrow, with Annie and Jim Farley. Mrs. Miller is lame and can't carry baby, so Annie and Jim,—they're some folks who lived in the house with us,—they're comin' too, to spend to-morrow, Christmas, you know, and they'll bring baby.'

'Mrs. Miller? Why, that's the name of Gaylord's niece; isn't it? She's going to live here herself, then?'

'Yes; with me and Gossip and baby.'

'But surely you're not Mrs. Miller's children? I thought she was a young woman. You can't be her daughter?'

'Oh, no indeed!' said Marie, laughing. 'I'm as big as her now. No; Gossip and I belong together, and we're friends to Mrs. Miller, and we're all going to live here.'

'The boy's a foreigner, isn't he? Here, dear, have some more coffee. Now I'll just cut this pie. I was baking this morning, for to-morrow, you know; and I thought a good fresh apple-pie wouldn't come amiss to you.'

A cup of hot coffee, and a sweet, juicy apple-pie, fresh from the oven, make an excellent wedge to open one's way into the confidence of any hard worker who has been contenting herself with a dinner of cold sandwiches, and those not of a very delicate kind. Before Mrs. Lovejoy returned to her home, she knew all that Marie had to tell, having spent more than two hours listening to her story. Nor had the hours been idly spent; for, when she learned that Marie had determined to have the whole house set in order before she slept that night, the old lady turned up her sleeves and the skirt of her dress, and helping herself to a dish-basin, pro-

ceeded to wash all the dusty plates and dishes in the closet and every pot or pan on which she could lay her hands.

Down in the small cellar Giuseppe was working away meantime, as busy as a bee. The same train which had brought them out very early in the morning, had brought such a store of provisions as they had never owned before,—a huge market-basket containing their Christmas dinner, a barrel of potatoes, a barrel of apples, and another of mixed winter vegetables. Neat and clean indeed must be the cellar in which such wealth was to be stored away.

By nine o'clock in the evening every thing was done, and two very tired but very happy and contented people sat down before the stove in the kitchen to rest a little by the fire before they went to bed up-stairs. The two small rooms above were to be occupied by them to-night; after that, Marie was to come down-stairs and sleep in the room which opened out of that which Mrs. Miller was to occupy, for she was too helpless to be left alone at night; but she would not sleep there to-night, for everything must be in perfect order when Mrs. Miller arrived, and she was to come very early in the morning to oversee the preparations for the dinner; for poor Marie, never having had any thing much to practise upon, was no proficient in the art of cooking.

Never shone a brighter Christmas-day than that which rose on the following morning; at least, if there ever were a brighter, Marie and Giuseppe had not seen it. The snow, which had melted slightly on the day before, had crystallized the trees and shrubs and bushes with diamonds; long icicles, which the sunlight filled with every colour of the rainbow, hung from the eaves and



the window-casings of the little house ; and the merry sleigh-bells twinkled through the air, making a joyous refrain to the deeper music of the church bells which were ringing in the Christmas morning with their most solemn peal.

'Come and see, Marie ! come and see !' cried Giuseppe, almost beside himself with delight, as he stood in the door-way regardless of the frosty air, much as he disliked the cold. 'Tis more beautiful as anysing. Come and see !'

'Shut the door ! the pretty things must wait till we get the house warm,' called practical Marie, from the kitchen. 'You're letting in such a wind that the fire is all blazin' sideways. Shut the door !'

But when the fire had been fairly kindled, the kettle put on, and the hearth brushed up, Marie allowed herself to be led out to see the glories of the day ; and, although her enjoyment was more quiet perhaps, it was no less full than that of her very excitable companion.

'There's just only one thing I don't like about it, Gossip,' she said, after looking around her for a few moments with silent pleasure. 'I'm afraid Mother Miller 'll get a fall maybe. It's so dreadful slippery.'

'Mother Miller' it had come to be already, although Marie's protective, responsible manner toward the crippled woman would have almost inclined the beholder to call her 'Mother Marie.'

'Tis only such leetle walk,' said Giuseppe. 'She don't fall, I sink. You go to de car for she, Marie, and I stay here and take care for de house. She don't fall wiz you.'

So it was arranged ; and Marie, after they had had

their breakfast, and she had put the final touch to her preparations for Mrs. Miller's home coming, set off for the depôt, which was, as Giuseppe had said, only a very short distance from the house. But Mrs. Miller was spared even that little walk on the crisp snow ; for a farmer who had driven down to the depôt for some supplies, noticing how feebly she moved, lifted her into his sleigh, and, bidding the whole party to follow suit, drove them to the cottage.

The instant that Cousime, from her seat in Annie Farley's arms, saw Marie, she screamed with joy, and, springing to her, clasped her little arms around her neck, and clung there so persistently that Marie would have been forced to leave her mother to the care of Annie and James if the good-natured farmer had not come to their help ; and, when they arrived at home and were safely within the door, Mrs. Miller had to pause in the tiny hall ; she could not even wait to enter the warm kitchen, but must stop just there, and take the girl's plain face between her hands, and kiss her thick, heavy lips and freckled cheeks again and again, and ask God to bless her for all that she had done for her and hers.

It was no poor return, Marie thought, for the giving up of her own selfish, wicked determination to keep the little child as her own ; and when Mrs. Miller promised solemnly to try to be to her, in her turn, a true and faithful friend, Marie took the promise from her lips, and pledged herself to be to her a loving daughter in the days to come.

A busy morning they had of it when they were once settled in the house. First of all, there was the whole establishment to be gone over ; not that it was so large, but then every individual spot and article in it must be

thoroughly examined and volubly admired. And, indeed, there was a great deal to be honestly praised in the little cottage. The old bachelor uncle had been poor, but he had been especially neat and thrifty; and everything needful for a very plain and simple style of housekeeping had been left ready to the hands of those who were to follow him. To people who had lived from hand to mouth all their days, managing to subsist on next to nothing, that small cottage, with its many conveniences and ordinary comforts, was a veritable palace. Up-stairs and down-stairs went the four pair of feet,—Marie and Giuseppe exhibiting, Annie and James admiring everything the house contained; while Mrs. Miller sat before the kitchen fire with a face which was most supremely peaceful and happy.

Then came the preparations for the dinner, the first Christmas dinner which some of the party had ever eaten. Mrs. Miller was an excellent cook, and, with her direction and help, the girls made ready such a meal as no one of them all, except Mrs. Miller herself, had ever seen or tasted before; and to crown all, just before they were ready to sit down, Mrs. Lovejoy's little grandson knocked at the door, and handed in a huge mince-pie, 'with grandma's happy Christmas.'

'Isn't she the best old woman ever was!' exclaimed Marie, who had already told the story of Mrs. Lovejoy's friendliness on the past day. 'She don't take it out in words; she's real neighbourly and good. You and she'll have good times together, Mother Miller. Oftentimes when I'm busy around, you and she can sit here with your sewing, and talk so comfortable. She does talk real nice, too.'

'She does better yet when she sends you mince-

pies,' said Annie, laughing. "'Fine words butter no parsnips.'"

'No; but they often make the parsnips slip down when you can't get butter,' said Marie, joining in the laugh. 'I've found that out.'

'You're finding out a great deal in these days, aren't you, Marie?' said Mrs. Miller.

'Yes, lots,' replied Marie, growing grave all at once. 'More than anybody knows.'

The boys, who had been out for a slide down hill, while dinner was in preparation, came in; and when the meal was over, and the dishes washed and put away, they all gathered around the stove to crack nuts; for a bag full of nuts of different kinds had been found in the barrel of vegetables which the kind hands and hearts in the city had sent out to them.

'Why, don't those sleigh-bells sound close?' said Marie, glancing toward the window as the tinkle of bells came nearer and nearer. 'Oh, look! they're surely stopping here!'

Giuseppe sprang up with a shout of delight, upsetting all his nuts upon the floor. Away scampered the nuts into every nook and corner, and away scampered Giuseppe to the door, crying out,

'Tis Meester Pheelleeps and Meester Tootle! Open de door! Open de door!'

Obedying his own orders before any one else had time to execute them, he rushed out. There indeed were his two friends, and Miss Tuttle with them.

'Softly, softly, Giuseppe,' said Mr. Phillips. 'There, if you wish to be of use, go and hold the horses' heads; for I want the coachman to help me with Mr. Tuttle. The doctor only gave him permission to come, on condi-

'Good-bye ! Good-bye !' sounded cheerily from the sleigh to the doorway, and from the doorway to the sleigh ; and away they drove over the sparkling snow to the music of the bells, leaving sparkling eyes, and music in the hearts of those they left behind them.

THE END.

*April, 1874.*

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